RETRO GAMER*
OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE



SPY VS SPY II

PROOF THAT SOME SEQUELS ARE DEFINITELY WORTH WAITING FOR

THE MAKING OF...

EXILE

CO-CREATOR, PETER IRVIN DISCUSSES SPACE, PHYSICS AND THE BBC MICRO



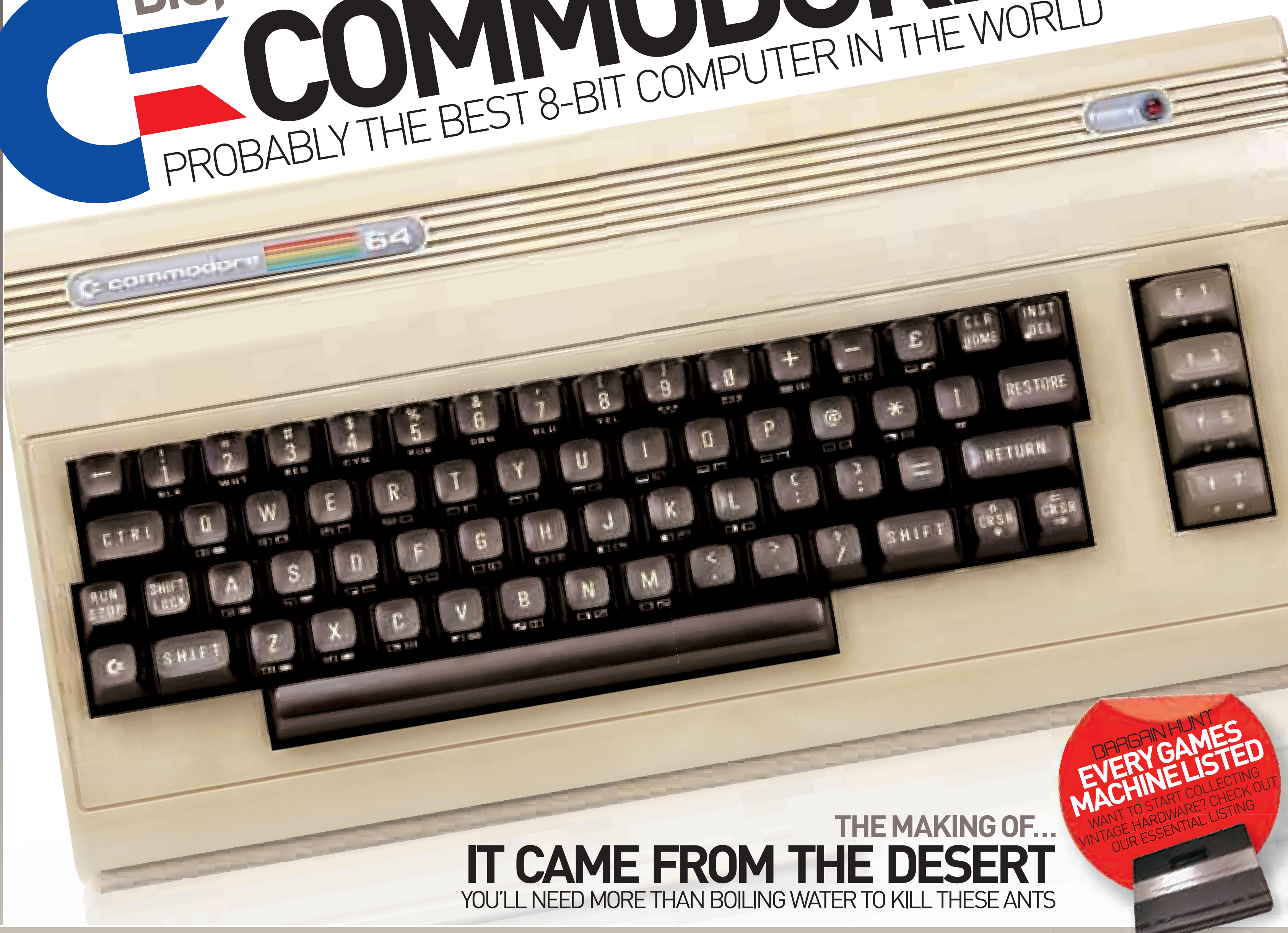
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BARGAIN HUNT

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THE MAKING OF...

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

YOU'LL NEED MORE THAN BOILING WATER TO KILL THESE ANTS

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO GAMER

3D MONSTER MAZE
WILL YOU EVER ESCAPE FROM MALCOLM EVAN'S FIENDISH MAZE?

SNK VS CAPCOM
CARD FIGHTERS CLASH – THE NEO GEO POCKET'S BEST KEPT SECRET

LODE RUNNER
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE FOR WOULD BE GOLD DIGGERS

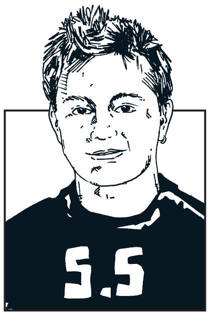
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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE C64 GAME



SPANNER

A solitaire game called… Spectrum, I think it was. I played it so much it was a sin. Claire, my neighbour (plus two doors down), could see five cards ahead of me, though. She waZ Xcellent at it..

Expertise: Sink Layering

Currently playing: *Dead Rising*

Favourite game of all time: *How To Be A Complete Bastard*



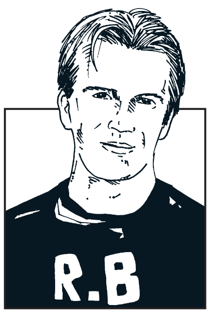
ASHLEY DAY

Scott Adams' *Questprobe: Fantastic Four*. It was damn hard – I never did figure out how to get The Thing out of that stupid tar pit. But I have great memories of trying.

Expertise: Read gamesTM to find out

Currently playing: *Star Fox Command*

Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



RICHARD BURTON

Boulderdash: Granted, it's certainly not the greatest graphics or music in the C64 world but for sheer playability there's not many better.

Expertise: Spectrum and Amstrad games

Currently playing: *Pacific* (Amstrad CPC)

Favourite game of all time: *Manic Miner*



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Project Firestorm. Chilling, gripping, and oh-so atmospheric. Stuck on a space station and hunted by invisible enemies which are not of this world. It's perfect for fans of sci-fi horror.

Expertise: Round term and two half hitches

Currently playing: Real-life yachting

Favourite game of all time: Lost at sea



PAUL DRURY

Sheep In Space wins by a fluffy mile, but second is *Jammin'*, a rastafarian themed puzzle game. Bob on the turntable and red, gold and green on the screen. I was stoned in love.

Expertise: Getting programmers to discuss their drug habits

Currently playing: *Twin Kingdom Valley* on mobile

Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



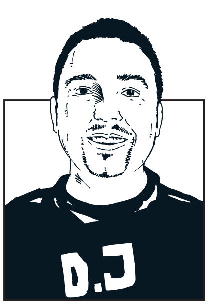
MIKE TOOLEY

Easy, *World Games* from Epyx. Barrel jumping on ice, caber tossing, cliff-diving – the list goes on. Polished to the nth degree and with the greatest sense of humour committed to CPU to date. Remake please Ovine.

Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played

Currently playing: *Enchanted Arms*

Favourite game of all time: *Mr Do!*



DARRAN JONES

Can't say I had much love for the C64 as I was an Amstrad geek. Still, I remember being utterly blown away by *Turrican* when I first saw it.

Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer

Currently playing: Some bizarre Japanese DS puzzle game with cats in it

Favourite game of all time: *Lego Star Wars II*



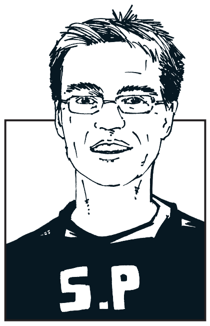
CRAIG GRANNELL

Paradroid's unmatched combination of strategy, blasting action, atmospherics and frantic mini-games means, for me, it just pips the superlative *Bionic Granny* at the post.

Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers

Currently playing: *Wizball*

Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*



SIMON PHILLIPS

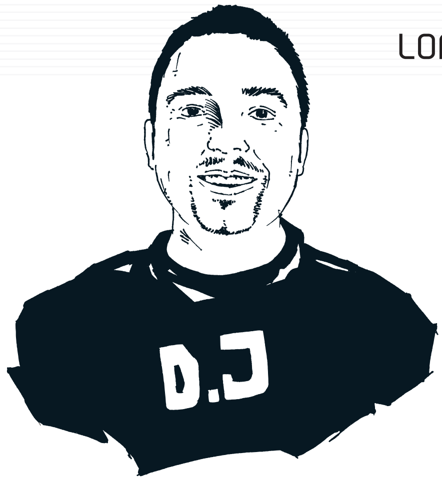
Head Over Heels. Alright, so it was one of the rare poor ports – but, regardless, Ritman's superb platformer still managed to play like a dream.

Expertise: Playing daddy

Currently playing: Teasing Darran with my 360's swanky webcam

Favourite game of all time: *Head Over Heels*

LOADING...



Times are changing and publishers are realising that they can make a healthy profit by repackaging classic hits from their back catalogues. Current handhelds all have a healthy selection of remakes and compilations, while Xbox Live Arcade (and very soon, Nintendo's Wii and Sony's PS3) enables you to download classic hits of yesterday for little more than a few quid.

Some may argue that it's just a cynical way of exploiting the games buying public, but I would have to disagree. Look at Capcom's recent output for example, not only does it give superb value for money with its compilations, it's also not afraid to take a chance on old franchises like last month's *Ultimate Ghouls 'N Ghosts*.

Of course, sometimes you end up with compilations that are simply retreads of titles we first saw on the PlayStation (Namco, we're looking at you) but as the games keep coming the interest in retro gaming just keeps growing.

It would have been unthinkable at one time to imagine Apple's iPod playing proper arcade games, huge exhibitions being dedicated to classic gaming or a philharmonic orchestra playing classic videogame music, but it's now becoming a regular occurrence, and as this interest in our favourite pastime continues Retro Gamer will be there every step of the way.





CONTENTS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES





ESSENTIALS

THE DEFINITIVE – **LODE RUNNER**



THE MAKING OF...



RETRO RATED



THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



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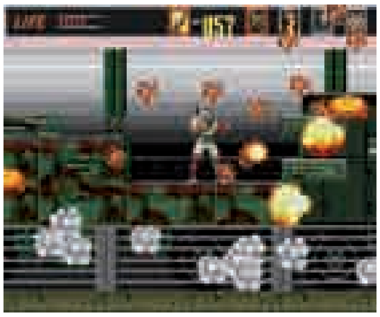
Can't stand the thought of missing the next marvellous edition of Retro Gamer? Then simply head on over to our subscriptions pages and place your order now!

p104



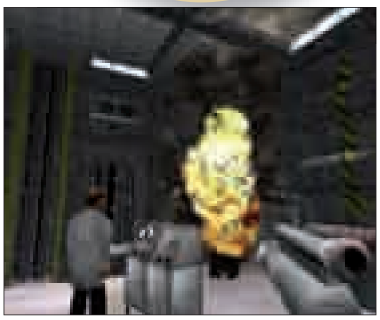
CLASSIC GAME...

3D MONSTER MAZE



CLASSIC GAME...

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

STEVE ELLIS

RETRO SCENE

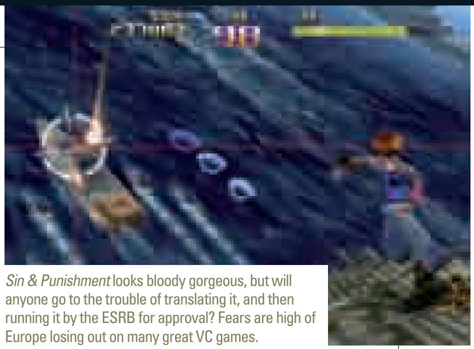
RETRORADAR

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

REVOLUTION REVELATIONS

FIRST NEWS ON THE WII'S VIRTUAL CONSOLE



Sin & Punishment looks bloody gorgeous, but will anyone go to the trouble of translating it, and then running it by the ESRB for approval? Fears are high of Europe losing out on many great VC games.

Moments before printing deadline, UK-specific information on the Wii and its Virtual Console has been revealed. Specifics regarding the three main territories (USA, Japan and the UK) all came within days of each other. America will be the system's debut, launching on 19 November with a price of $249.99 (roughly £132). The Japanese launch, very surprisingly, will be roughly two weeks later, on 2 December priced at 25,000 yen (roughly £112). The UK details were announced on Friday 15 September at a London event lasting several hours. The system will reach these shores on 8 December costing £179.99, while the classic controller will be £14.99. This is a lot more than in the USA or Japan, and actually makes it cheaper to directly import an American system.

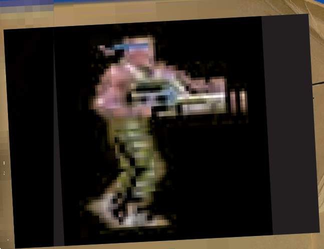
The key point of interest for Retro Gamer was of course the Virtual Console strategy. There will be 60 Virtual Console games available by the end of the year, claims Nintendo. You'll be able to purchase 2000 "points" for £14 (prices may change), with downloadable games having a three tier pricing structure: 500 points (£3.50), 800 points (£5.60) and 1000 points (£7), for NES, SNES and N64 games respectively. The pricing has sparked concern among fans, since many games are available for less when you buy the actual cartridge second-hand. Companies supporting the VC include Atlus, Bandai-Namco, Capcom, Hal Laboratories, Hudson, Irem, Konami, Square-Enix and Taito. SNK has also pledged to support the Wii with its back catalogue of games and is currently in negotiations to make their SNES and NES titles available.

But there's a concern many of the best VC games won't be released outside of Japan due to excess European bureaucracy. Will *Sin & Punishment* come over if it needs translating and then running by various age ratings boards? With the ROM translation scene (see page 100) making so many great Japan-only games available in English (albeit through illegal emulation), Nintendo will have to work very hard to make its legal download system appealing. Otherwise most people will likely continue to enjoy import games via illegal means. Perhaps a collaboration is in order?



Can you picture yourself holding this pad, playing fantastic games like *Seiken Densetsu 3*? Let's hope they make import titles easily available.

HERO OF THE MONTH



BILL RIZER

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the star of Konami's *Contra*

First appearance: *Contra*

Distinguishing features: Kills things

Weapon of choice: Spread gun

Most likely to: Transform into a robot for Europe

Least likely to: Star in the theatrical version of *Oklahoma!*

Unusual fact: He was renamed Mad Dog in the American NES release, which we think is much cooler

RETRO PEAS, IN A POD

FIFTH GENERATION IPODS TO PLAY CLASSIC GAMES

On the evening of 12 September Apple chief executive Steve Jobs announced to a press event filled with journalists, that Apple was entering the handheld games market with its fifth generation of iPods and, via iTunes, launching alongside it a dedicated games download service. Downloading games from iTunes will cost $4.99 each (roughly £2.60 for UK gamers), and will be controlled with the device's Scroll Wheel. The press release states "Games are available for download in the 21 countries in which iTunes operates." The full list of games made initially available are as follows: *Bejeweled* (puzzle), *Tetris*, *Pac-Man*, *Vortex* (shmup), *Zuma* (puzzle), *Texas Hold 'Em* (poker), *Mini Golf*, *Mahjong* (tile matching), and *Cubis 2* (puzzle). While the games themselves are the expected safe-bet releases, this announcement changes the market playing-field and could signify some interesting future developments. The fact companies such as Namco are supporting the venture speaks volumes. It also means there are now at least six supported handheld devices (GBA, DS, PSP, GP32X, Mobile Phones, iPods) which play games, with rumours of Microsoft also planning to enter the market. Companies see the importance of gaming on-the-go, and they're also waking up to how important retro (or retro-styled) games are. If only they'd release more quirky titles instead of safe-bets (we want Konami to release the MSX version of *Metal Gear 2*!).



LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 11: M.U.L.E.

A criminally overlooked game *M.U.L.E.* had an endearing loading screen (accompanied by some great music), and you couldn't help but secretly wish for your own Multi Use Labour Element as a pet. With its AT-AT like appearance and chubby legs, Ozark Softscape had given the low-resolution beast a lot of charm.



JUST IN SEGA HAS ANNOUNCED 'MONSTER WORLD COMPLETE COLLECTION' AS AN UP-AND-COMING SEGA AGES 2500 INSTALMENT, WHICH INCLUDES BOTH WONDER BOY AND MONSTER WORLD IV.

GET YOUR GAME ON

EXHIBIT ON GAMING HISTORY RETURNS TO LONDON

Some of you may have attended the Barbican's Game On exhibit in London some years ago, which rather admirably covered the history of videogames. It went on to be shown in several other cities around the world, but has now returned to London.

Retro Gamer spoke with Stephen Bromberg of the Science Museum about what people can expect from Game On. "It's in part the same exhibition which was at the Barbican, but has been modified. The content has been changing all the time – new release games have been added since it was first at the Barbican – so visitors will see new content. We will be running a series of events looking at areas including: past, present and future of gameplay and design; art and music in gaming; controversial topics and debates; massive online and social play; user-generated content; psychology and physiology of playing games." He also spoke about Game On's previous international success. "The exhibition has been to 10 venues worldwide – including Chicago, Seattle, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Lille and has attracted very healthy attendances, being a big hit with retro gaming fans and family groups."

This new event is sponsored by Nintendo, but Stephen was quick to allay concerns over them influencing things. "The exhibition is sponsored by Nintendo and we're grateful for their support of Game On, plus their support of events in the Science Museum's Dana Centre – our adults-only bar and café for exploring contemporary science, medicine and technology – and our popular children's hands on gallery Launch Pad. They had no stipulations at all for what would be in the exhibition."

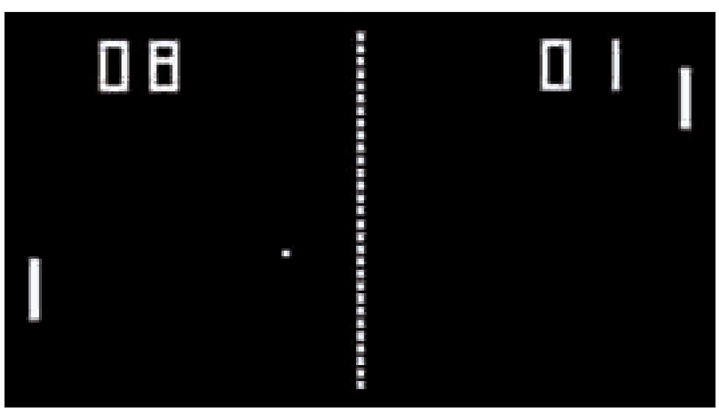
Neither were there any problems with arranging things, with everything running smoothly. Stephen elaborated "The original exhibition took two-and-a-half years to develop initially and has been updated constantly since. Because the exhibition was designed to tour, it's very easy to put in different spaces, and it breaks into different parts like history, top ten games etc."

He then explained a bit more about what the aim of the exhibit is. "People will be transported back to when gaming was a new phenomenon. The world's first computer game from 1962 will take its place alongside today's advanced systems. It includes more than 120 classic and modern games, which visitors will be able to play. Game On traces the science behind the developments in game production over the last 30 years and tackles some of the serious issues behind this huge industry. We're particularly excited that Science Museum visitors will have a chance to see the PDP-1, the computer that ran the world's first videogame, *Space War*, and the world's first manufactured arcade game, *Computer Space* from 1971, as well as [giving people] the chance to play classic arcade games. Nowhere else will people be able to see the entire history of the games industry laid out, explained and ready to play."

Game On opens 21 October, and runs until 25 February. Tickets are £8.50 for adults and £6.50 for children, with discounted family and group tickets available. They can be purchased now on 0870 870 4868 (booking fees apply). Educational groups receive discounted admission. Contact the Education Booking Office on 020 7942 4777 or edbookings@nmsi.ac.uk. Or visit www.sciencemuseum.org.uk for more details.

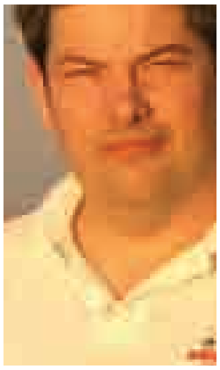

The London Science Museum seen from the outside at night is simply beautiful


The arcade section from the Barbican exhibit was highly impressive







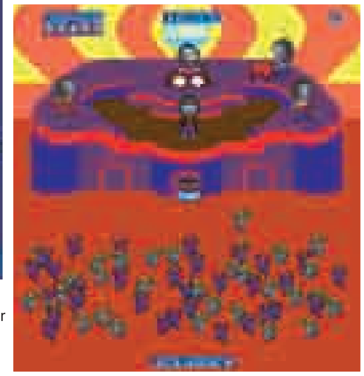




» Page 1 of the game's advertising



» Steve's level: save the mic cos the band is nothing without the lead singer

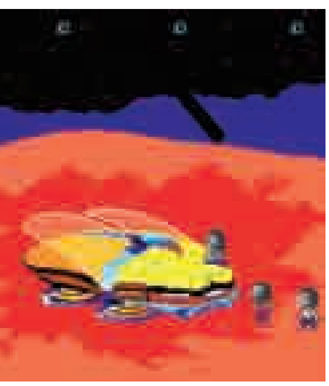


» **Right:** End of game concert scene, clearly the crowds enjoy the bass





» In Neal's level, you need to save the guitar using *Lunar Lander* style controls against gravity



» The group's Special Scarab space craft, whoopee, want one.



» The 1983 Journey arcade machine in all its glory

"IT IS VERY COLLECTIBLE, NOT JUST BECAUSE IT'S RARE, BUT BECAUSE IT'S SO QUIRKY AND BAD THAT IT MAKES IT ESPECIALLY CURIOUS AND FUN TO SHOW OFF" ARCHER MACLEAN

COMMENT

ONE HELL OF A JOURNEY

This month I bring you the tale of an obscure arcade game from 1983, called *Journey*, named after the Seventies rock group it was helping to promote.

It certainly had a few industry 'firsts' such as being the first game to be endorsed by a rock group, first game to have album cover artwork all over the sides, first game to use animated digitised faces on game characters, first game to play real album tracks from a mechanical tape player and amp inside the game cab. It was probably the first game out into the trash compactor too…

The game's own instructions say, and I quote, "Wild alien groupoids have seized Journey's electro supercharged instruments. Your mission is to help the band members retrieve their instruments from the dangers of five planets around the galaxy. Trek through the hazardous obstacles in the quest for each instrument and battle your way back to the Scarab vehicle. Make it back to earth and watch the group play their hit song whilst the band manager Herbie guards the stage from frenzied groupoids who will still try to take their instruments".



» Close-up of the black and white faces on coloured body animation

It did have one unusual bonus feature for completing the mission, but I think I'll mention that later.

Journey was touted as having 'stunning visuals, with state-of-the-art digitised graphics with an increased number of on-screen pixels' and using 'sophisticated new synthesizer technology to live up to rock fan expectations". Sounds Cool, huh?

However, all this hype wasn't matched by the final result. The in-game sound was an abysmal mess from a pair of regulation sound chips for the time, the AY-3-8910, and it just sounded really irritating. If you listen hard enough with fingers in your ears you can just about make out which of the group's actual tracks are being 'reproduced'.

The addressable screen res of the game was a mere 256*240 in 5-bits / 32 colours, which is a lower resolution than your modern day 2 inch mobile phone screen, yet this was being displayed on a 19" colour TV. I suppose old lo-res TVs rounded off square pixels with their natural 'bi-linear filtering' to make things a little better.

But there's worse. The game designers persuaded all five band members to have a dozen digitised face photos taken, using a primitive black and white camera system giving just four shades of grey. These black and white images were then plonked on top of teeny tiny coloured little body animations, and it just looked naff, naff, naff.

Arcade folklore says that pre-release test cabs were tried out on location using a primitive web-cam idea to grab a high scorer's face, and show a small icon next to their score. But reports came back of various men and women climbing on machines to dangle anything but their faces into the camera, and the idea was dropped!

The game is truly awful to play, being a limp-wristed simple, badly executed mess throughout. Commercially it was a catastrophic financial disaster, not so much due to the cost of creating it (being done by three people in just 12 weeks), but the much bigger costs involved with paying for the group to endorse it, the costs of all the new fangled hi-tech state of the art facial digitisation and, above all, the cost of all the PR and marketing hype in both the games press and mainstream rock media.

It was badly receive by the arcade industry, and sales were dire. Those that were put out on location suffered predictably worn and stretched cassette tapes and jammed tape mechanisms. I guess that most operators trashed them after it



» Album cover artwork used on the game's promo flyer

stopped working, which is one reason why there are less than a dozen cabs in collector's hands today. Having said that, it is very collectible, not just because it's rare, but because it's so quirky and bad that it makes it especially curious and fun to show off. But only the once!

No one knows how many (or, how few) were made, but I do know just two collectors with a real cab. One is working but using hacked modern tape mechanism with re-recorded tape loop.

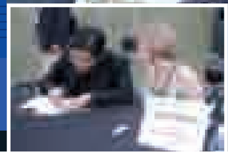
BUT, the cabs crowd-pulling stunt, its piece d'resistance, its icing on the cake, its masterstroke (okay, okay get on with it – Ed)… was when you got to the end-of-game 'concert' and a big amp kicked in and the Audiovox tape player spooled up and out came really LOUD hi-fi quality stereo recording of the group's top track complete with loads of heavy bass, making everyone nearby do their best air guitar pose. And sure enough, when this happened, crowds built up around it to see what all the fuss was about.

Looking back I reckon the game was deliberately easy to complete, so that the track "Separate Ways" would get played quite often, thereby marginally driving up sales for the group's *Frontiers* album. And just to hammer the point home the album artwork was all over both sides of the cab and across the marquee. But what an expensive way to promote an album!

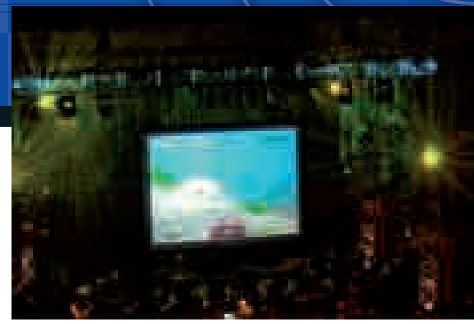
The only other time I ever saw a crowd pack round an arcade machine was when watching in awe at the breathtaking visuals of *Dragon's Lair* in 1983 (because it was Disney quality animation streaming off a laser disc…) but that too was yet another troublesome mechanical device in an arcade game.

Moral – don't put delicate bits of perishable machinery in a cabs designed to be kicked to death in a hostile arcade environment. ARCH





» Yuji Naka, Stan Lee, Hideo Kojima, Nolan Bushnell, Toby Gard, and countless other celebrities. Who will turn up at the London event though?



VIDEO GAMES LIVE

RENOWNED MUSIC CONCERT FINALLY REACHES ENGLAND

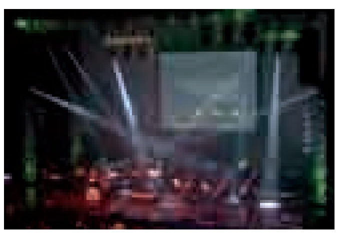
Having debuted on 6 July 2005, Video Games Live is a musical extravaganza (with a strong retro emphasis) which wowed American and Canadian audiences whilst touring over the past year. It was created by two games industry composers, Tommy Tallarico and Jack Wall, produced under their company Mystical Stone Entertainment. The first event was held at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, with music performed by the renowned LA Philharmonic. It sold out, with over 11,000 people attending, making it the largest videogame concert ever. The event went on to tour Seattle, San Jose, Philadelphia, Chicago, Indianapolis, plus Vancouver and Toronto in Canada, among other places. All of these were met with much critical acclaim.

Now, finally, this great event is making its way to the UK via AEG Live. The UK's debut event will be at London's Hammersmith Apollo venue on Saturday 25 November, starting at 7.30pm. The UK press release says, "Share the intensity and thrill of the gaming world's most powerful compositions, as a live orchestra and choir recreate the best videogame music on a spectacular stage. The show combines exclusive video footage and music arrangements, synchronized lighting, solo performers, electronic percussionists, cinema surround sound and interactive segments to create an explosive entertainment experience. VIDEO GAMES LIVE will transport you into the heart of the gaming world. There will also be spectacular prizes, first time playable games and the opportunity to meet Britain's top game designers and composers."

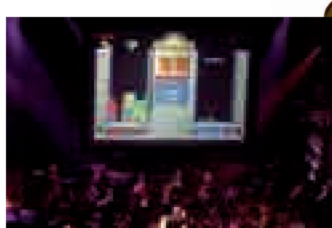
What makes the announcement so exciting is that it's more than just a music show. It's about community spirit and celebrating both videogames and the accompanying music, with pre-show festivals and post-show meet-and-greet parties. Previous shows have featured Cos-Play competitions (dressing up as videogame characters), which should satisfy any retro fan with a penchant for young woman dressing up in skimpy clothing (Retro Gamer's editor will of course come dressed as Strider). Certain things have also been area-specific, with LA featuring a mini retro arcade courtesy of Videotopia and VGL having a booth at Philadelphia's Wizard World – implying there'll be something suitably London-centric this November.

The music is performed to gameplay footage shown on a massive screen. Previously there has also been audience interaction with members playing certain games live onstage, while the orchestra plays the accompanying tune. For a better idea of what to expect, check out www.videogameslive.com which has details, Q&A sessions with organisers, photos, and videos of past concerts.

Along with the London Game On exhibit, this is looking to be one of the year end's many highlights. Tickets are already on sale, priced at £25. They can be purchased via the 24-hour hotline on 0870 405 0448, or through AEG's website (www.aeglive.co.uk). Expect a full show report from Retro Gamer after the event. All images shown were taken from past shows in America and Canada.



» The original Space Invaders: now a piece of classical music at Video Games Live.



» There are far too many games and photos to cover here. The scale of the event is truly epic.

THE CURRENT PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE LISTS MUSIC FROM THE FOLLOWING TITLES AND SERIES:

MARIO	CASTLEVANIA
ZELDA	SONIC
METAL GEAR	FINAL FANTASY

CLASSIC ARCADE MEDLEY:

PONG	GAUNTLET
DONKEY KONG	SPACE INVADERS
DRAGON'S LAIR	OUTRUN
TETRIS	GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS
FROGGER	

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



LECHUCK

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would the Ninja Turtles be without Shredder? Rubbish, that's what. This month: LeChuck

First Appearance:
The Secret Of Monkey Island

Distinguishing Features:
The beard! Plus flaming eyes

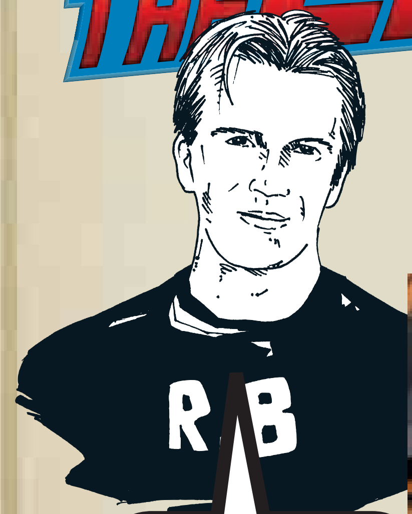
Weapon of Choice:
Voodoo doll, magic power

Most likely to:
Hunt Guybrush to the ends of the Earth

Least likely to:
Develop a root-beer dependency

Unusual fact: LeChuck is actually Guybrush Threepwood's brother, and they're both kids, stuck in an amusement park… What the hell?

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1986

October 1986: a busy month. Sega reveals the Master System, Amstrad reveals whopper profits, Commodore can't sell its new C64, a 100K Crash, Mastertronic is in uncharted territory and Amstradians get WACCI. Richard Burton points the way…



» Sega's new console – looking good, playing well and selling loads. Then along came *Mario* and the NES…

October 1986 saw the official UK launch of a new games console, the Sega Master System. The SMS was initially released in modest numbers with much larger quantities being distributed to stores over the coming months in time for the big Christmas sales push. It was marketed in the UK by Ariolasoft and cost a very reasonable £99.95.

Amongst the first wave of eight games for the SMS included *Fantasy Zone* and *Choplifter* on cartridge. The other software format of choice for the SMS was a credit card sized Astron card, on which *Transbot* and *Hang-On* were released. All titles were £19.95.

Sega were not going to have things all their own way however, with news that two other consoles would be hitting UK shores in the coming months. The Atari 7800 and Nintendo with its NES console were preparing to square up in this tri-cornered console contest.

Amstrad, once again, recorded a stunning set of financial figures for the year ending June 1986. Overall profit was up £75 million (up 273%) with sales increasing to £304 million (up 123%). In a time of troubles, financial difficulty and general malaise in the home computing market, the figures from Amstrad were quite remarkable.

According to Amstrad, sales of both its PCW and CPC machines were going very well. With 650,000 CPC machines (both 464 and 6128) and 350,000 PCW systems sold worldwide, it is not hard to see why the company produced a set of figures as good as it did.



» Credit card sized software for the Master System. Unfortunately, *Great Soccer* would not work in an ATM machine

However, Amstrad still had a few teething problems with its new Spectrum Plus 2 machine. Although the system had received its official launch at the beginning of September with Amstrad pronouncing that it would be available to purchase by the end of the month, it wouldn't be until mid-October that any discernible quantities of the system would be available on the high street.

Amstrad's standard business promise of stating it would not announce a product was ready for release until it was actually finished and ready to be sold, still remained intact however, as a miniscule number of the machines were given to selective large stores. So it was officially in the shops by the end of September… well… a couple of dozen of them were.

Commodore was also having a few problems with its newest computer release. It seemed retailers needed persuading to take stocks of its new C64c machine, the newly streamlined C64. This setback appears to have stemmed from the old bull-nosed C64 machines that were still on sale. They were enjoying somewhat of a renaissance due to them being up to £50 cheaper than the newer systems and new customers plumping for those rather than the C64c.

Have you ever fancied a house like Bill Gates with voice controlled lighting and automated odour sensitive bidet? Well, although not in the same league, Red Box, a new computerised interface system, got released. It aimed to bring home automation, via a range of 8-bit machines, to your abode.

The ZX Spectrum Red Box starter pack contained three interfaces entitled Red Leader, Red One and Red Two. Good names if you're an X-Wing pilot, not great if you're a peripheral. Red Leader plugged into your Spectrum and once programmed, using its own brand of BASIC, could control the other two interfaces. That done, it was capable of running independently from the Spectrum, allowing your computer to be turned off rather than suffering a power pack meltdown after 24 hours of continuous service.



» It's new, it's redesigned, it's sleek and it's not selling very well



» They're boxes and they're red. Plug them in and control exciting things like lights. Good for their time though…

Uses? Turning lights on and off, motion detection and as an alarm system. Price? A hefty £129.99. Red Box was also available for the BBC and C64.

Motoring news and Sanyo reveal to throngs of completely uninterested Japanese consumers its newest product: a motorised three-wheel trike made out of plastic and called the Amorton Car. It continued to imitate the Sinclair C5 perfectly by being a complete retail flop.

This month also saw the release of the very first issue of the long-running Amstrad magazine and user group, WACCI. Originally, the first few issues were intended to be cassette-based only, but after a combination of pressure from the rapidly growing readership and the time it actually took to physically duplicate each issue, the magazine quickly became print-only.

The original founding members/writers of WACCI featured in the very first issue were "Auntie" John Kennedy, Steve Anderson, George Fontanini, Richard Burton, Stephen Grainger, Alex Aird and Gary Burns. The original proposal and concept of WACCI



» The Amstrad magazine/user group of choice for CPC owners through the Eighties and Nineties.

was the brainchild of the editor, Jeff Walker, who later went on to produce another mail-order only magazine, Just Amiga Monthly, in collaboration with the second WACCI editor, Steve Williams. WACCI only recently came to an end, just short of its 20th birthday.

Software chart news. Mastertronic was getting all hot under its budget-priced collar as its seemingly unwavering dominance of the Gallup Software Chart Top 20 was about to be wrenched from its vice-like grip. Its software constantly populated the software charts. WHSmiths would end all that abruptly.

WHSmiths, one of the biggest retailers of software at that time, had not previously been included in Gallup's chart equation. After finally being asked to return sales figures from several of its larger stores, the effect on the software charts was significant. The reason for this was that WHSmiths did not actually stock Mastertronic titles, which was much to the benefit and merriment of other software houses.

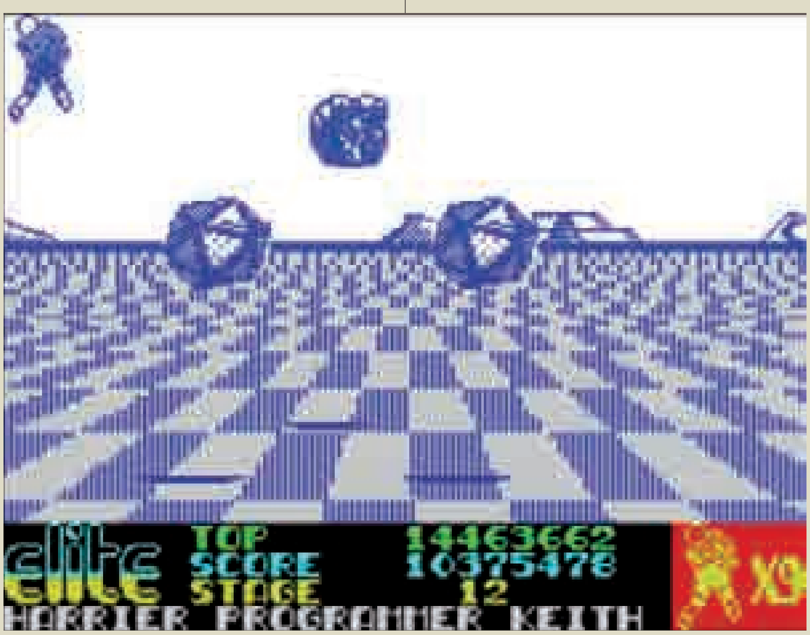
Elite Systems was a busy bunny revealing its plan of attack for the forthcoming Christmas campaign, announcing several arcade conversions it was working on. With such titles as *Bomb Jack 2*, *Space Harrier*, *Commando 86* and *Ikari Warriors* waiting in the wings, the Elite onslaught on the gaming markets was all set… at least, at this stage, that was the plan…

Unfortunately, only *Space Harrier* made it out in time for Christmas, on the Spectrum at least. *Commando 86* became *Duet*, part of a *Hit Pak* compilation early in 1987, *Bomb Jack 2* saw the light of day a few months into 1987 and the very belated *Ikari Warriors* finally got released mid-1988. *Space Harrier* was fairly average gaming fodder and even attempting to play it sat in a rocking chair balanced on a beanbag didn't make up for the lack of a hydraulic cabinet.

Not to be outdone in the licensing stakes, Ocean returned fire with news of its newly acquired film related titles, *Cobra*, *Top Gun*, *Short Circuit* and *Highlander*. Would this stellar foursome alter the generalisation that movie tie-in games were under developed and over hyped piles of toss? Erm…

After 12 issues, the head honchos at Newsfield decided that Amtix! was due a facelift. They introduced new logos for the magazine cover and the Accolade awards. They were pretty swanky too.

The Amtix! Accolades awarded to cream of the Amstrad software crop this month had a distinctly adventurous flavour. The cave dwelling games of choice were *Rescue On Fractalus* (Activision), Mike Singleton's *Doomdark's Revenge* (Beyond), *Tir Na Nog* (Gargoyle Games), *Jewels Of Darkness* (Rainbird/Level 9) and *The Fourth Protocol* (Century Communications).



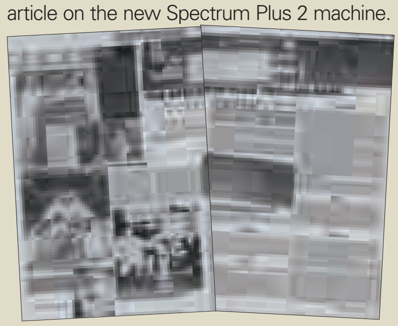
» Space Harrier dude might want to watch out for those enormous balls of doom spinning his way

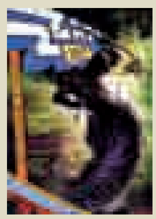
THIS MONTH IN… CHARTS



Crash Flash

Issue 33 of Crash was the first to feature a cover not drawn by Oliver Frey. Ian Craig was responsible for the vampire fellow on the cover, although what it was all about is anyone's guess. Inside there was a first look article on the new Spectrum Plus 2 machine.

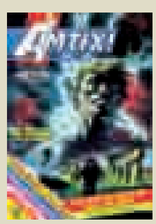




Zzap! Back

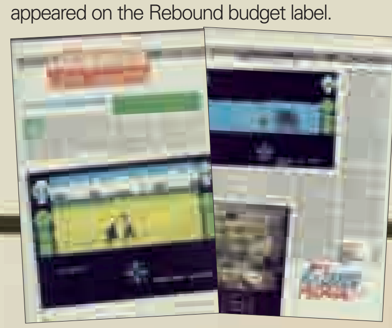
Issue 18 featured a superb cover in homage to *Beyond The Forbidden Forest*. With your archer dude being eaten alive by a giant worm combined with ample blood splatterage and an oversized mosquito coming in for dessert, it was certainly a memorable cover for a splendid game.





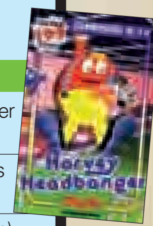
Amtix! Antics

Issue 12 of Amtix! had a *Tir Na Nog* flavour with a cover featuring Cuchulainn, an evil looking Sidhe and a standing stone encrusted Land Of Youth. Amtix! also had an exclusive distribution deal with Gargoyle to sell the game although it later appeared on the Rebound budget label.



OCT 1986

AMSTRAD



1. Harvey Headbanger (Firebird)
2. Ghosts 'N' Goblins (Elite)
3. Kane (Mastertronic)
4. Green Beret (Imagine)
5. Elite (Firebird)

SPECTRUM



1. Jack The Nipper (Gremlin Graphics)
2. Ghosts 'N' Goblins (Elite)
3. ACE (Cascade)
4. Kung Fu Master (US Gold)
5. Ninja Master (Firebird)

COMMODORE 64



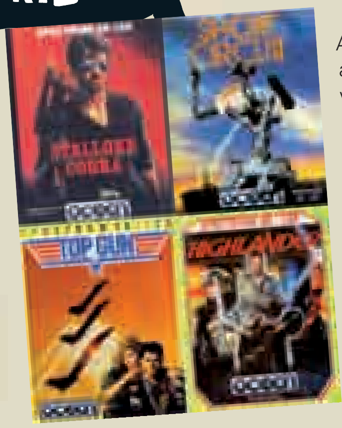
1. Ghosts 'N' Goblins (Elite)
2. Speed King (Mastertronic)
3. Dragon's Lair (Software Projects)
4. Leaderboard (US Gold)
5. Green Beret (Imagine)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART SEPT '87

1. True Blue (Madonna)
2. Rain Or Shine (Five Star)
3. Don't Leave Me This Way (The Communards)
4. You Can Call Me Al (Paul Simon)
5. Every Loser Wins (Nick Berry)







» Four films, four games, nothing special

Amstrad Action concurred with Amtix! and gave its Mastergame award to *Doomdark's Revenge* with AA Raves being plonked around the necks of *Impossible Mission* (US Gold), *Dan Dare* (Virgin), *Powerplay* (Arcana) and *The Fourth Protocol* (Century).

Crash were celebrating after reaching a circulation milestone… and we're not talking about Lloyd Mangram's blood pressure… The Audit Bureau of Circulations released their latest set of figures that revealed Crash had sold, on average, for the first six months of 1986, an incredible 101,483 copies per month. I expect there were many firm manly handshakes and knowing nods of appreciation around Crash Towers when that news was

1986

OCTOBER NEWS



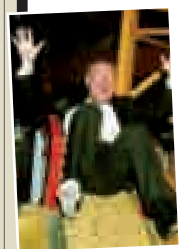
» The anagram king, Richard Stilgoe, is himself an anagram… Arise Cold Girth. Can I go on Countdown now?

October 9th saw London play host to the world premiere of Andrew Lloyd Webber's new musical, *The Phantom Of The Opera*. It has since gone on to pull in a humungous $3 billion in ticket sales. Fact – bearded anagram shuffler and occasional Countdown dictionary corner dweller, Richard Stilgoe, penned many of the lyrics for the musical. Nice one Dicky.

Tragedy struck on 10 October when an earthquake hit San Salvador killing over 1000 people and making 200,000 people homeless.

26 October saw Jeffrey Archer resign as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party following newspaper reports that he had paid a prostitute to travel abroad to avoid her facing the media regarding their alleged meetings that had been leaked to the press.

Unfortunately, The News Of The World newspaper photographed the money handover and it all started to unravel from there on. Archer won a libel damages award against the Daily Star (1987), that was later found to be partly based on a false alibi (1999), which led to accusations of perjury and, ultimately, being found guilty. A four-year prison sentence followed for his troubles. He served two years and was released in 2003. If nothing else, Jeffrey Archer is a colourful chap.



» Mr Archer takes the allegations of perjury very seriously…



» The sequel to Mike Singleton's classic game, *Lords Of Midnight*, the mighty *Doomdark's Revenge*



» Out with the old metallic logo and in with a crisp clear new one. Shame Amtix! stopped six issues later…



» Gargoyle's classic game sees Cuchulainn wandering the Land of the Young with hair flapping and Sidhe at every turn



» An atmospheric game with cracking game-play to boot, it's Beyond The Forbidden Forest

released. The Crash Smashes for Issue 33 were a little thin on the ground with just a trio of games attaining outright Smashness. They were Costa Panayi's *Revolution* (Vortex), *Trivial Pursuit* (Domark) and *Scooby Doo* (Elite).

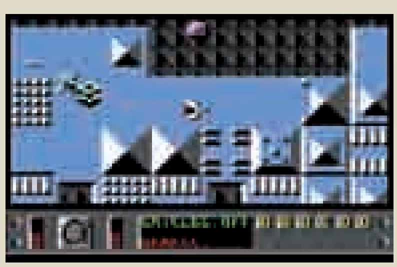
Zzap!64 offered a bit more meat to their gaming platter with the fantastic *Beyond The Forbidden Forest* (US Gold), *Powerplay* (Arcana), *Parallax* (Ocean), *Iridis Alpha* (Llamasoft/Hewson) and *Super Cycle* (US Gold/Epyx) all Sizzling away quite nicely. Sadly, there was no Gold Medal awarded this month.

Computer And Video Games echoed the sentiments of other magazines by being in accord with several awards. Their Games of the Month went to *Dan Dare* (Spectrum, Virgin) and *Super Cycle* (C64, US Gold).

The C&VG Hit! seal of approval was securely stamped on *Psi Chess* (Spectrum, The Edge), *Paperboy* (Spectrum, Elite), *Cauldron 2* (Amstrad, Palace Software), *Parallax* (C64, Hewson), *Mission Elevator* (Amstrad, Micropool) and *Futurezoo* (Spectrum, Clywd Adventure Software).



» Nifty lifty game, *Mission Elevator*, was a surprise hit on the Amstrad and not at all like *Elevator Action*



» A fast moving shooter made all the better by Martin Galway's superb music



» Not only a Zzap Sizzler but C&VG Game Of The Month award for the wonderful *Super Cycle*

eMag

ROBOCOP

"DROP IT!"



- **PUBLISHER:** NIHON BUSSAN/AV JAPAN
- **RELEASED:** 1988
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £60+ FOR ORIGINAL PCB BOARD

HISTORY



Paul Verhoeven's satirically violent *Robocop* was always going to make for a great videogame – it was just a matter of finding the right company for the job.

Step forward Ocean, who, after securing the original film licence, sublicensed the arcade game out to Data East, which left Ocean free to concentrate on porting the finished game to the various home computers of the time.

Like many movie licences, Data East's *Robocop* may not have perfectly matched the film's plot, but it sure as hell managed to capture all the ultra-violence that had been contained within. Using the tried and tested formulae of a scrolling run-'n-gun game, *Robocop* starts off with the law enforcer of the future casually patrolling the streets of Detroit and punching the living daylights out of anyone that's foolish enough to get in his way. As the game progresses, the enemies become more and more reckless, so the metal-clad officer must resort to his gun (which, like in the film, is coolly concealed within his leg) in order to continue his task of cleaning up the scum-filled streets and hopefully getting home in time for a tin of baby food.

Of course, artistic licence throughout the game is rife, especially when it came to the game's many bosses, but they weren't the only elements in *Robocop* that differed from the original movie. We don't remember Robocop's gun being able to fire off three-way shots for example, and we certainly can't recall the big guy jumping around like a crazed jack-in-the-box, but then, this was a balls 'n' all arcade blaster. Ocean's home computer efforts were far more faithful to the film, but, let's face it, few arcade goers would have wanted to put together an identikit puzzle of Clarence Boddicker's face if it meant they were going to be missing out on some precious shooting.

Thank god then that Data East took the wise decision to make ED-209 the very first boss you fought…




SENY
NEO



Year Released: 1982

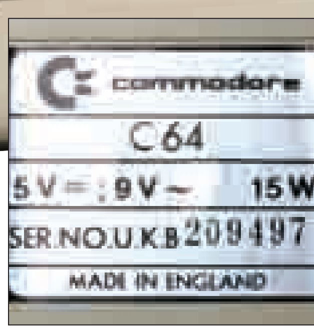
Original Price: August 1982 ($595) (USA), December 1982 (£349.99) (UK)

Buy it now for: £10-£15 (eBay)

Associated Magazines: Zzap!64, Commodore User, Commodore Format, Your Commodore

Why the C64 was great… The Commodore 64 was a jack-of-all-trades and a master of many. Success on both sides of the Atlantic meant its software library covered every genre, style and influence possible, with a panache most other machines struggled to equal. Despite Commodore's insistence on pushing it as a business computer with a price to match in the UK, it truly was the gaming platform to own. Even though it looked like a beige breadbin.









Commodore 64

WITH THE VIC-20 HAVING ENJOYED A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH AND SOME NEWLY DESIGNED CHIPS IN THE WINGS, COMMODORE WAS NOW WONDERING WHERE TO GO FROM THERE. MAT ALLEN LOOKS AT HOW ONE DECISION WAS THE GENESIS FOR ARGUABLY THE GREATEST AND BESTSELLING HOME COMPUTER EVER.



Commodore was not immediately looking for a successor to the Vic-20. The launch had been a bigger success than expected, and work on the newly commissioned video and sound chips was reaching a conclusion. The new VIC-II video chip was an improvement on the chip inside the Vic-20 and utilised (or borrowed you might say) features from other leading computers and consoles of the time. The SID sound chip was something new, a three-channel synthesiser that would end up blowing away the competition for years to come.

Both chips had been scheduled for use in arcade or dedicated videogames. However upon their completion in November 1981, Jack Tramiel, boss of Commodore, decided they would instead be used in the company's next home computer. A computer that he wanted to debut at the Las Vegas CES in January 1982. A computer that had yet to be designed! Not to be deterred, the new machine was designed in two days and five prototypes were built by the end of the year.

With the Microsoft BASIC of the Vic20 hastily rewritten for use on the new hardware, the machine was ready for show. Apart from the impressive specifications of the C64, which exceeded anything on the market, no one could understand how Commodore was proposing to sell it for just $595. Their jaws would have been through the floor if they'd known it would be initially manufactured for just $135.

The project and its inherent cost savings probably would not have happened without the acquisition of MOS Technology several years earlier. Not only did they have the expertise and experience, with many other companies using the 6502 CPU, but also the production line facilities enabled chips to be manufactured a lot cheaper and quicker than other companies could achieve. Using the same case and keyboard as the Vic-20 was another factor; aside from halving the cartridge slot size to make way for an internal modulator, the design of both was actually somewhat similar.

The C64 went on sale in August 1982 and was an immediate success. A few issues had been fixed before launch, and a few,

Not so big in Japan

Many people do not realise Commodore had launched the Vic-20 in Japan (as the Vic-1001) several months before it was available in the West in an attempt to acquire market share in the territory. With the imminent launch of the C64, Commodore had a second stab at Japan; however the aim was to sell an entry-level machine at a much cheaper price than the C64 would be in the US. The resultant MAX computer, encased in a membrane keyboard, was hardware-wise very similar to a normal C64. To save costs there was no serial port, no monitor port, virtually no RAM and no internal OS, meaning for all intents and purposes it was a console with a keyboard. Games could only be loaded from cartridge, and the keyboard had little real use unless one of the limited programming modules was acquired. Unsurprisingly the machine hardly sold and today commands a respectable collector value. Most of the games were programmed by HAL Labs (who are now with Nintendo) and are equally collectable. In a shrewd move, Commodore added a MAX mode to the C64 meaning that the cartridges will play fine on it.



APART FROM THE IMPRESSIVE SPECIFICATIONS OF THE C64, WHICH EXCEEDED ANYTHING ON THE MARKET, NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND JUST HOW COMMODORE WAS PROPOSING TO SELL IT FOR JUST $595





One step beyond
Although technically superseded by the Amiga, the C64 was still going strong by 1990. Keen to capitalise on the machine's consistent popularity, Commodore commissioned an internal project to upgrade the computer for the new decade. The result was the C65, a machine with considerable power inside (such as the new VIC-III chip, VGA capability, greater RAM, and two SID chips for stereo sound), but with the ability to still play roughly three-quarters of the current C64 games.
Anticipation and excitement about the machine grew, as witnessed by copious letter writing to magazines at the time. And then for whatever reason it was cancelled in mid-1991, apparently at the request of then chairman Irving Gould in deference to keeping the C64 alive. The potential that the machine offered would never be realised.
That was not to say no one would get to play with the hardware. When Commodore was liquidated in 1994, many of the machines housed at its Toronto office sneaked out into the general domain and were rapidly grabbed by fans and collectors, though it was soon found many were in various states of completion and revision. Today it remains an interesting curio, one sadly that never came to be.

including the notorious "sparkle" effect, would be dealt with in the months immediately after. Most of these were fixed by the time the second revision (B) motherboard was produced. Revision A machines are today hard to find (estimated less than 0.2% of the 25 odd million production run) and are collectable because of their quirks and bugs.

From the off it was obvious Commodore (aka Tramiel himself) meant business and was going for the throats of the competition, especially Atari. The price of the C64 was down to $395 before Christmas, and was under $200 by 1985, with manufacturing costs cut by two-thirds. By that time the C64 was the home computer to own in the US. This was in contrast to the UK, where Commodore's operation was a little less price conscious. It stayed above the £200 mark for a long time, and peripheral prices were of a similar nature; at one point the disk drive cost more than the machine itself!

JAWS WOULD HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE FLOOR IF THEY'D KNOWN IT WOULD BE INITIALLY MANUFACTURED FOR $135

This does seem strange given the Commodore 64 had far more competition in Europe than in the US, especially from the Spectrum. Whilst the C64 won the hearts of gamers in the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia, it was beaten to number one in several other countries including the UK, France and Spain. In the UK the battle was always with the Spectrum. At almost half the price for much of the Eighties, the Spectrum was a cheaper alternative that was also home to many classic games.

Why pick the C64 over the Spectrum? Anecdotal evidence points to its form and function as much as its power (the "real" keyboard being a selling point), with the price tag partly seen as a badge of status. Playground battles would be fought with both sides arguing their case, with levels of tribal loyalty and dedication rarely seen since. Technically the C64 was streets ahead, but there were aspects where the Spectrum was superior. That was mainly isometric adventures, such as those perfected by Ultimate, and anything vector graphic driven. The design of the C64 was not suited to either. That wasn't to say it couldn't be done, as the classic *Mercenary* and the conversion of *Head Over Heels* demonstrate. The C64 made a better stab at anything coming its way from the Spectrum compared to anything going the other way.

However C64 users in the UK didn't just have to rely on homegrown games to satisfy their needs. From early on, they were able to sample the delights of American games, courtesy of companies such as US Gold and Ariolasoft releasing or importing them for sale. Some users, though, would take to importing the games themselves. Quite often this would be the case with some high profile titles, until the companies in question (Infocom, we look at you) decided to send them over here.

For the first couple of years of the C64's life, games from the likes of Epyx, Access, Synapse, Broderbund and Infocom were better than almost anything programmed in Europe. Watching *Impossible Mission*, *Beach-Head*, *Choplifter* or *Lode Runner* being demonstrated was amazing. This was also a time when Electronic Arts published innovative games such as *M.U.L.E.*, *Racing Destruction Set* and *Skyfox* instead of bundles of shovelware. Thankfully programmers this side of the pond got their backsides in gear and started matching the imported efforts.

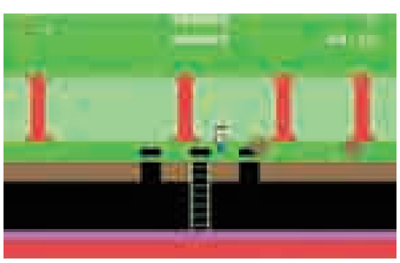
You have to begin with Jeff Minter, creator of weird addictive programs, who was given a C64 very early on as part of his deal with HES in the US. The three games *Ancipital*, *Revenge Of The Mutant Camels* and *Iridis Alpha* are some of his best work, and would have been hard to achieve on any other platform. He was just the first of many developers, as Tony Crowther (*Loco*, *Blagger*), Geoff Crammond (*Revs*, *The Sentinel*), Archer Maclean (*Dropzone*, *IK*), Jon Hare and Chris Yates (*Parallax*, *Wizball*), and Paul Woakes (*Encounter*, *Mercenary*) would all follow.

Just as can be seen between Western and Japanese game design today, there was a similar dichotomy in games produced here and over there. Different influences, different cultures, different trains of thought. There was also another good reason for why the US produced the majority of the RPGs, strategy games and adventures: the disk drive. By 1984 the datasette had all but been abandoned by users and publishers alike in the US, whereas in the UK it was seen as a cheap method of storage pioneered by the continued success of other computers. There are numerous examples of two versions of a game being written, one example being the movie tie-in *Aliens*. The Electric Dreams UK version is a first-person adventure type affair, whereas the Activision US release is multiload, and portrays the whole film in various stages. In terms of execution, the UK version recreates the terror of the film, whereas the US version is more "big-budget" but far less effective in its execution.

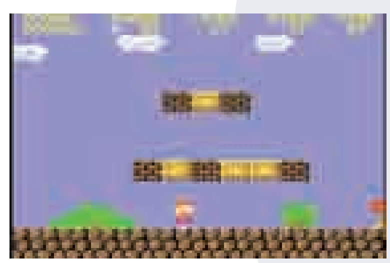
Like it or loathe it, the tape format would define the games written in the UK for the first few years of the C64's life, until the inevitable progress and demand for bigger games forced more multiload antics onto the hapless users. Let's face it, tape wasn't really cut out for that sort of access, but with the introduction of fast loaders into the UK



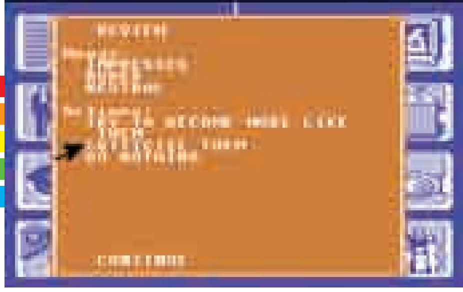
» C64 owners finally got a taste of Julian Gollop's genius when this masterpiece of strategic turn-based warfare was released for formats other than the Spectrum

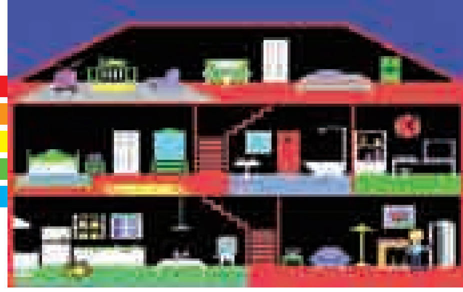






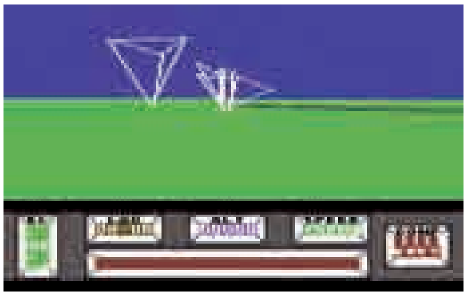
» No hardware is ever immune from controversy, and these three games are proof positive the clones can be as good as the real thing: *Cuthbert In The Jungle, Katakis, The Great Giana Sisters*





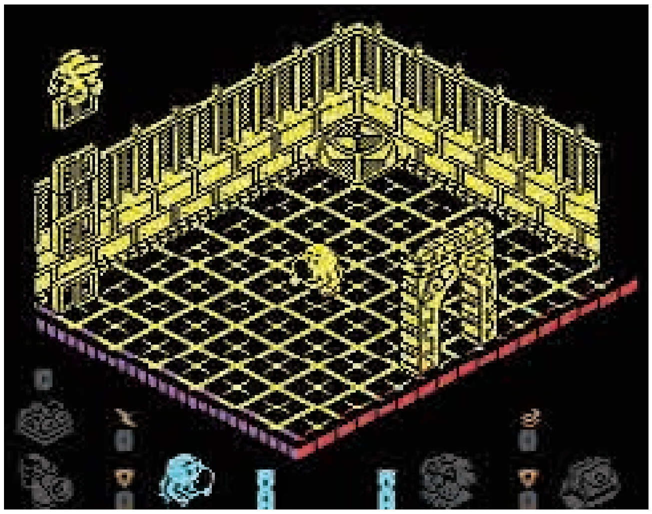


» Using the flexibility of the disk drive, there were some terrific and unique ideas prevalent on the C64, including this trio of releases from Activision: *Alter Ego (top left), LCP (above), Portal (bottom left)*



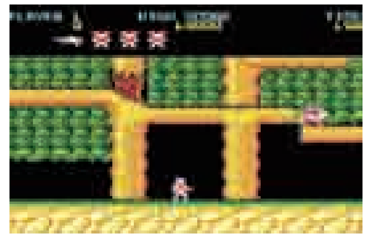
» Paul Woakes needs to be tracked down to explain just how he managed to fit a whole world of wonder into 64K of RAM. Who says the C64 can't do vectors?

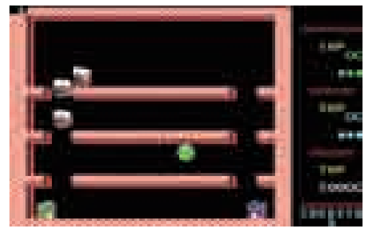
» A Spectrum conversion you all cry? For sure, but the C64 showed it was equal to the task of running the best software its rival had to offer



» All the Bs for arcade conversions, this set of three were some of the best realised on the limited, by comparison, hardware: Buggy Boy, Bionic Commando, *Bubble Bobble*







(another pioneering moment from Jeff Minter), things became a little more bearable.

Even at the peak of its popularity, it has been said that only around 10% of all C64 owners had a disk drive. Which by the powers of deduction means 90% were stuck with tape loading only. As mentioned earlier, this was mainly down to Commodore's high pricing policy in the UK. Hence to accommodate this fact, it is no surprise that a lot of games were designed for single load only, squeezing as much as possible into that 64K (or less). The benefit to those who had access to both formats is obvious; the C64 repeatedly delivered quality games in all genres and interests and wasn't confined to a subset of possibilities.

Those Commodore 64 owners out there are already no doubt counting on their fingers all the games they loved and separating them into single and multi load. Unless you had a disk drive fairly early on, it would be expected that the single loaders are going to win out here. Anyone who played *Turbo Outrun* on tape will know how excruciating it could be (having said that, before fast loaders appeared, loading from disk was almost as bad). Sometimes it was done right; having the next level load during sequences in *Dragon's Lair 2* or *Hawkeye* for example, or playing a small mini-game such as *Invaders* or *Painter*. It also gave rise to the "loader tune" to occupy gamers as they patiently waited for their latest epic to dribble into memory. Music for the C64 would turn out to be probably the defining point of its lifespan.

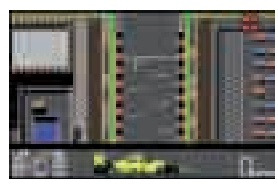
Aside from tapes and disks, the C64 could also use cartridges. Despite the number of games available being tiny compared to the overall catalogue (just some 300 odd releases), there were some great titles to be had, though many of them were only available on that format, and only available in the US. US Gold did some balancing by releasing some of the Sega titles in the UK, Atarisoft published a few of their own in Europe, and HES released games on tape, but the majority stayed behind.

Most of Commodore's own efforts can be ignored, although *International Soccer* is impossible to avoid, and *Wizard Of Wor* is one of the best conversions available for the C64. Other titles people should look to grab from abroad include *Gyruss* by Parker Bros, *Diamond Mine* by Roklan, *Moondust* by Creative, *Maze Master* by HES and *Jumpman Junior* by Epyx. Look to Australia and cartridge versions of classics including *Leaderboard* and *Ghostbusters* can be found, as Home Entertainment Suppliers had a licence to produce them in the late Eighties.

EVEN AT THE PEAK OF ITS POPULARITY, IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT ONLY AROUND 10% OF ALL C64 OWNERS HAD A DISK DRIVE

Not all the important cartridges were games however. Anyone with a disk drive needed a utility cartridge to go with it, and examples such as Datel's Action Replay, the Final Cartridge, the Expert and Super Snapshot were all good sellers. They not only performed quick copying of disks, but enabled pokes to be entered, had built-in fast loaders, allowed easy use of disk commands and more. In today's disk heavy environment, they are an even more vital necessity.

The other essential weapon was the review magazine. After the success of Crash for



» Before *Micro Machines* came *Slicks*, a very similar game, and one of the best overhead racers available for the C64.



SID IS UNIQUE. THERE WAS NOTHING LIKE IT BEFORE AND THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING LIKE IT SINCE







» **Above:** RPG fans were well catered for, with releases from Interplay, SSI, Origin and Electronic Arts, and more recently the massive 14 disk home-brew epic *Newcomer*

Spectrum owners, Newsfield launched Zzap!64 in April 1985, and for the next three or so years, it was the best thing on the planet – if you were a C64 owner that was. With the attack of pointy hair and pointed words from the twin terrors of Gary Penn and Julian Rignall, gamers felt safe that if they said something was good, then it was going to be good.

The magazine lost its way after that point due to various changes, but was always a good read even if it had lost some of its magic. Coming late into the show was Commodore Format, which didn't launch until the end of 1990 when the C64GS was released. Zzap!64 had never really had a proper rival until then, so late in the C64's life, there was suddenly some real competitive spirit. Format lasted until 1995, which was some going for a magazine with an 8-bit theme.

Despite the effort of magazines to keep gamers on the straight and narrow, some people still bought duff software. But there was method to the madness; it was all to do with the music. It may seem strange, but some games (*Comic Bakery*, *Miami Vice*, *Rambo* and *Knucklebusters*) despite being less than great, still sold rather well due to exceptional SID tracks. Music more than anything else elevated the C64 above its contemporaries and made playing games more than just bleeps and bloops. Where else has one chip inspired countless remixes, paid-for music albums, samples in commercial records, organised concerts and a professional mixing/composing station?

SID is unique. There was nothing like it before and there has been nothing like it since. There is a distinctive form to its sound, and those musicians capable of extracting the most from it were almost heralded as gods at the time. Be it the frantic fast paced nature of *Monty On The Run* (Rob Hubbard), the psychedelic trippy *Parallax* (Martin Galway), the oriental themes of the *Last Ninja* (Ben Daglish and Anthony Lees), the industrial drum based rhythms from Matt Gray or Steve Rowlands' bouncy house-like tracks, there was something for all. Melody was key; many classic SID tracks are instantly hummable and maddeningly catchy.

Samples, in the form of instruments or voices, as part of the music became popular after Martin Galway and Chris Hülsbeck started using them in compositions in 1987. When utilised homogeneously, in such pieces as *Savage* and *Turbo Outrun* by the Maniacs of Noise or *Combat School* by Galway, they really added something to the end production. Unfortunately Commodore fixed the bug in the 6581 SID chip that allowed samples to be played for the 8580 revision, meaning they became very quiet. Fortunately there is a solution available to fix this "problem".

With the graphics, music and games making the C64 a global success, it may not be surprising that all of Commodore's 8-bit hardware that followed never came anywhere close. You could say that was partly due to its popularity – people saw no need to change, apart from going onwards to the Amiga or Atari ST. For example, the C16 and Plus 4 were nice machines but only ever occupied a niche market space that disappeared once the price of the C64 came down.

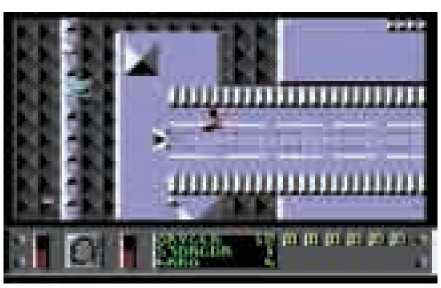
Whereas the C128 on paper looked an interesting prospect, the idea of a better equipped C64 with twice the memory and processor speed could have been seized upon by developers but never was. Very little C128-only software was written as users voted with their wallets and stuck with the C64 instead. Early on in the C64's life, Commodore marketed the SX64, an alleged portable version (or not, if you've ever tried carrying one about) of the hardware with a built-in monitor and disk drive. However with an initial price tag in the US of just under $1,000 (and a similar value here), it was never destined to sell in large amounts. Having said that, it isn't difficult to find them being sold privately today in the US or Germany.

Commodore's biggest error was trying to compete for the space occupied by Sega and Nintendo in the console market. It is similar to the mistake committed by Amstrad with the GX4000. The idea of attracting those users across was sound, but in true Commodore fashion, it got the execution horribly wrong. The main problem was the price of the new C64GS (Games System) unit: at £100 it was only just less than a normal C64 bundle. The joystick included with the console was horrible, and with the lack of keyboard, many of the older cartridges could not be played properly.





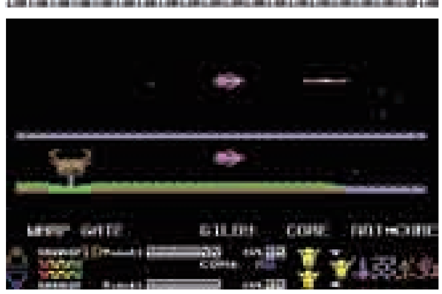
» The C64 was still home to new development talent into the Nineties as witnessed by the Rowlands brothers' games, which always had the highest production values possible





» Sensible Software was known for producing unsensible games, including the two that kick-started its success: *Parallax* and *Wizball*

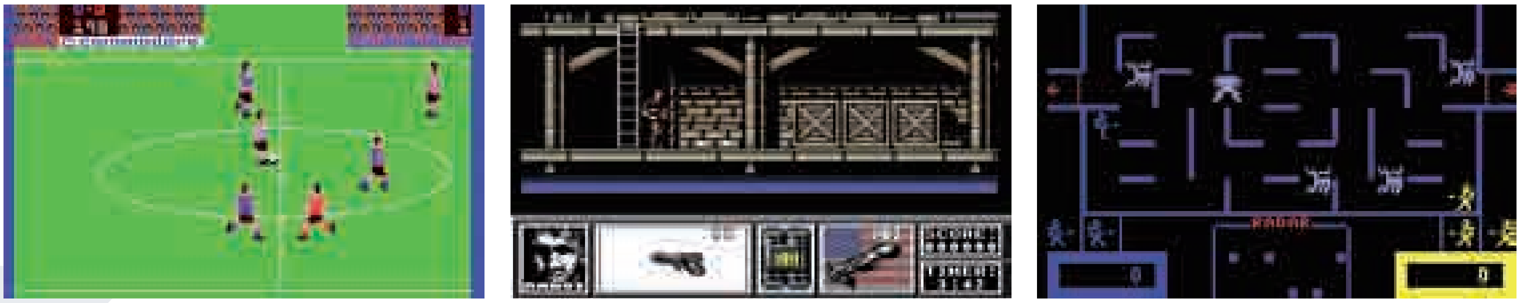




» Jeff Minter was behind the C64 after progressing from the Vic20, and all of his games for the machine have a unique quirkiness about them



» Indescribably brilliant, and a concept seldom used since. Control the influence device to destroy or takeover all of the rogue droids aboard eight ships



» Just about every C64 owner will have played *International Soccer* at some point, but there were other great cartridges to get including the conversion of *Wizard Of Wor* and Ocean's range for the 64GS



» Just because it was budget did not mean it was bad. There were a number of undiscovered gems including *Spore* and *Warhawk*, plus the best-value game ever, *Thrust*

It did kick off the interest in cartridge based games again, albeit briefly, and there were some excellent new titles available for a slightly higher than expected price tag – the majority coming from Ocean. There was also a lot of confusion at the time as many people thought the new cartridges would not work with a normal C64; as a remedy many games had stickers positioned prominently on the front, pointing out they could be used with any machine. In the end roughly a third of the 100,000 units manufactured were sold, with the rest being broken down for use in C64C models instead.

The C64 had already gotten an update in its own right in 1987 with the introduction of a new slim-line design to match the Amiga, and a slight name change to the C64C. The internals of the machine were redesigned and decreased chip wise along with the aforementioned SID revision, although some early C64C models do have the 6581 inside. It was still business as usual for sales, and the C64 kept selling and kept being popular despite the release of vastly more powerful hardware and consoles experiencing a resurgence. It was also a reason why the C65 project was cancelled (see boxout).

Where the C64GS had failed in attracting the next generation, the ordinary C64 succeeded. With the turn of the decade, interest in the ageing technology would be expected to decrease, and yet a new wave of younger users was just taking their first steps. On their heels was a new set of programming talent looking to keep the machine alive, and maybe show a few tricks that established teams would utilise themselves. If games such as *Turrican*, *Turbocharge*, *Mayhem In Monsterland*, *Battle Command* and *Elvira 2* had been released earlier in the machine's lifespan, who knows where development could have led. What is certain is that constant innovation and experimentation with the hardware made it do things the designers never conceived as being possible.

In 1993 Commodore announced it was finally halting production of new C64 units. Eleven years is a long time in today's terms for manufacturing essentially the same piece of hardware. It even managed to outlive Commodore's own demise the following year, as commercial software was still available to buy into 1995. From then on, it was the era of home-brew and fans supporting the machine.

Home-brew is merely a technical term for it, as unlike the Atari 2600 or NES, ordinary users were programming their own games and selling them (and many did) since the launch of the C64. Without the support of retail shops, it meant distribution went back to being word-of-mouth, mail order and private advertisements. In the last ten years, thanks must go to Russ Michaels (Electric Boys Software) and Jon Wells for pioneering the process and today there are several groups releasing "for money" software including Protovision and Cronosoft, along with many others doing it for free.

CONSTANT INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE HARDWARE MADE IT DO THINGS THE DESIGNERS NEVER CONCEIVED AS BEING POSSIBLE

One thing is also certain: a disk drive is an essential part of owning a C64 today and is now highly affordable. With the efforts of groups such as Gamebase64 and individuals such as Peter Rittwage to document and preserve all games ever released, and cables available from various outlets, programs can be transferred from PC to real floppies easily to play on a proper C64. Many new game releases are disk only. Like many other 8-bit machines, the future is still active and bright for hardware that is rapidly approaching its twenty-fifth birthday.

I want my DTV

The origins of the DTV (Direct-To-TV) unit lie with the C-One project, created and designed by Jeri Ellsworth. Conceived as a way to emulate the C64 as closely as possible through software, it eventually progressed into a platform capable of handling many other formats due to the unique nature of its powerful design. Although the C-One was aimed at a developers' market, it did not go unnoticed. Mammoth Toys signed a deal with Ellsworth to produce a computer-on-a-chip version for use in a self-contained games joystick, similar to many already sold by companies such as Jakk's Pacific. With the project completed in a few months, it went on sale just before Christmas 2004 and sold more than a quarter of a million units.

The later PAL version has several improvements and a more refined games line-up, making it the preferential choice of purchase. Not only are there several Easter eggs to find, the unit is also fairly easy to hack and alter due to its C-One origins, meaning amongst other things, new software can be loaded into the unit and extra joystick ports added for two-player games. The C64 lives on, though maybe not quite in the format people expected!

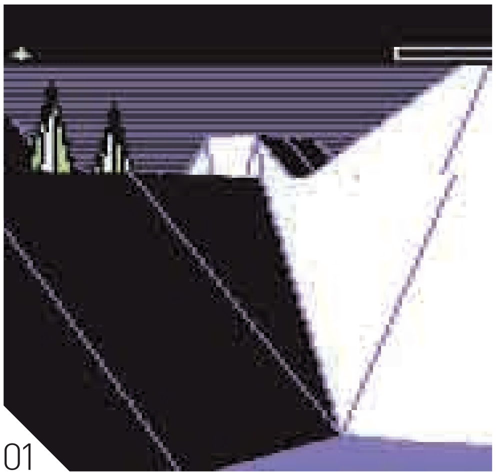




Commodore 64

PERFECT TEN GAMES

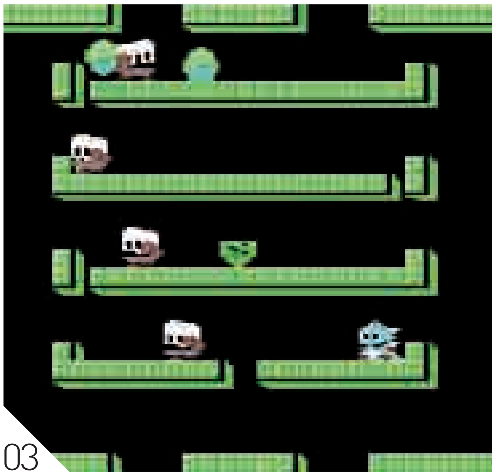
The Commodore 64 has a staggering selection of great games so choosing a top ten was always going to be a tricky process. Before you all write in and complain though, just remember that these are opinions only and no harm is meant.



01



02



03



04

THE SENTINEL

» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **PUBLISHED BY:** FIREBIRD
» **CREATED BY:** GEOFF CRAMMOND
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** STUNT CAR RACER

01 **Geoff Crammond's name may be synonymous with racing games, but when he wasn't pouring his heart and soul into his latest *Grand Prix* title, he was adept at turning his hand to all sorts of different genres, with *The Sentinel* being a perfect example of his handiwork.** Haunting and with a meticulously designed game engine that gives a tremendous sense of scale and depth, Crammond's *Sentinel* was one of the best strategy games on the C64 – although to be fair, it initially appeared on the BBC Micro – and even today offers a worryingly addictive challenge. Best of all, emulation means you no longer have to endure those lengthy screen loads. Lovely!

IK+

» **RELEASED:** 1987
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SYSTEM 3
» **CREATED BY:** ARCHER MACLEAN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MERCURY

02 **There had been previous games involving the slamming of bodily appendages against each other, in a sweaty contest of stamina and skill, but it was Archer Maclean's *IK+* which was first to ménage-à-trois with the concept – metaphorically speaking.** It revolutionised the mechanics of games like *Way Of The Exploding Fist* and *Karate Champ*, and also incredibly well on the humble C64. Music was by Rob Hubbard and while there was only one background, it was filled with many clever Easter Eggs (those joyous bonuses you could spend months discovering). The fluidity of control made it easy to initially play, but this was backed-up by a complex system which rewarded continued practice. A classic.

BUBBLE BOBBLE

» **RELEASED:** 1987
» **PUBLISHED BY:** FIREBIRD
» **CREATED BY:** SOFTWARE CREATIONS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SLY SPY: SECRET AGENT

03 **There have been plenty of classic coin-op conversions on Commodore's mighty 8-bit, but *Bubble Bobble* ranks as one of the best.** From its cute, vibrant – if slightly squashed looking – visuals to the outstanding, bouncy music, the C64 perfectly captured the spirit of the original arcade hit and proved to be the perfect game to show-off to your Spectrum and Amstrad owning mates. It might not feature all the secrets that appeared in the original arcade game and having to press up on the joystick in order to jump is no substitute for a proper fire button, but if you're looking for an extremely competent conversion of a classic arcade hit, look no further. A superb conversion that shouldn't be missed.

MAYHEM IN MONSTER LAND

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** APEX COMPUTER PRODUCTIONS
» **CREATED BY:** CREATURES 2
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CREATURES

04 **There was no question of this not making the Top 10, what with it being regarded by many as the C64's last great release both in terms of gameplay and sheer technical achievement.** As most already know, it infamously used a "bug" in the graphics chip, which allowed entire screen scrolling and therefore much smoother and faster gameplay. Despite being a C64 title it has all the speed and tactile control you'd expect from an early 1990s platformer, which not only guarantees it a place here but also means it's still great to play even today. Being a dinosaur and returning colour to the land has never been such fun.

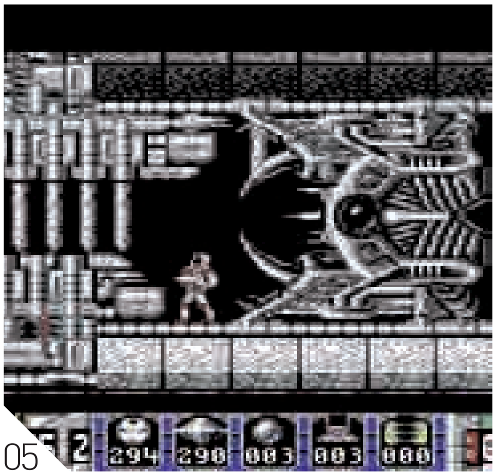
TURRICAN

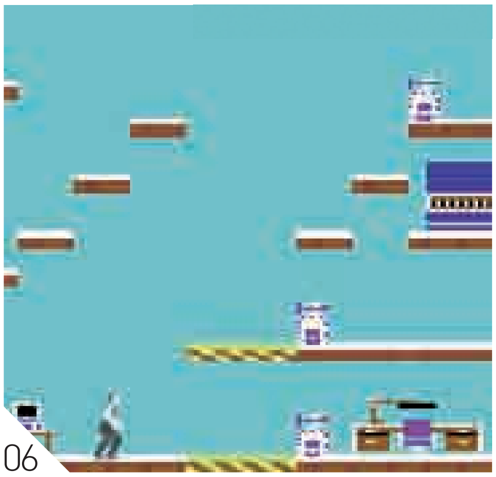
» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PUBLISHED BY:** RAINBOW ARTS
» **CREATED BY:** MANFRED TRENZ
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE GREAT GIANA SISTERS

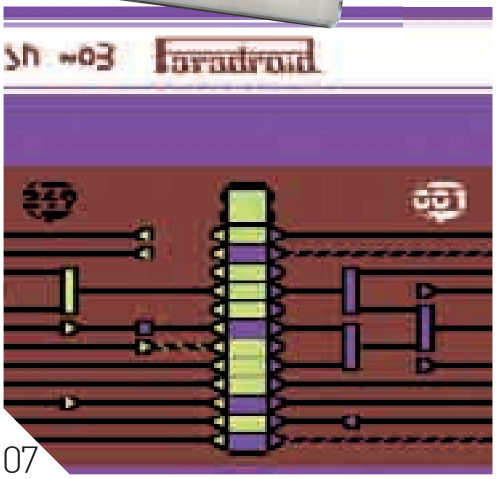
05 **There's an unwritten law in videogames that states: all C64 lists must feature at least one Manfred Trenz game.** While many will no doubt argue that Trenz's *Turrican II* is clearly the better game, we've decided to stick with the original, mainly because there was nothing quite else like it when it first appeared in 1990. It may well have borrowed heavily from obscure coin-op *Psycho-Nics-Oscar*, but Trenz's technical wizardry of Commodore's machine simply blew us away, and it still manages to impress today.

Part platformer, part shooter, *Turrican* features incredible visuals, a stunning score by music maestro Chris Hülsbeck and some of the most frenetic gameplay around. It fully deserves every accolade that has been bestowed on it.















IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** US GOLD
- » **CREATED BY:** DENNIS CASWELL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** PHASER PATROL

06 **We featured a Making Of article on Dennis Caswell's timeless classic in Issue 22, so by now all of you should have had a chance to experience this classic game.** *Impossible Mission* was a perfect blend of joystick waggling dexterity (especially when avoiding the terrifying spheres of floaty-electric-death), and also tricky puzzles (many had problems with the final password-piece assembly). Although its premise of searching furniture (to find those elusive passwords) and avoiding robots may sound nauseatingly simple, it made for a game, which was easy to get into but difficult to put down. Although ported to several other systems, for us the C64 original is still the best version.

PARADROID

- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** HEWSON
- » **CREATED BY:** ANDREW BRAYBROOK
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** URIDIUM

07 **Ask any C64 owner to name their favourite games, and chances are that this superb effort from Andrew Braybrook will almost always make their top five.** Taking control of a weak prototype droid, your aim is to simply clear each boarded spaceship (of which there are eight) of its out-of-control robots. While your droid is woefully underpowered (even Dusty Bin could have it in a scrap) it does retain the unique ability to transfer itself into any available droid (albeit for a limited amount of time). This enables it to take out the ship's more dangerous foes (via a charming mini-game) and adds an interesting play mechanic. With its subtle blend of strategy and blasting, *Paradroid* deserves to be in every C64 owner's collection.

WIZBALL

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** OCEAN
- » **CREATED BY:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** PARALLAX

08 **Playing *Wizball* was a rites of passage for many Commodore 64 owners and became more than ample ammunition for those who wanted to taunt their CPC and ZX Spectrum owning peers.** Insanely smooth scrolling, a scintillating soundtrack from the always dependable Martin Galway and its slick blending of genres means that *Wizball* will forever remain within the higher echelons of Commodore 64 classics. It might well have taken a while to get used to your ball's incessant bouncing, but once you finally mastered it and collected a few power-ups *Wizball*'s true identify and depth are revealed. Quite possibly one of the most beautifully crafted C64 games that you'll ever have the privilege to play.

PROJECT FIRESTART

- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** DYNAMIX
- » **CREATED BY:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RISE OF THE DRAGON

09 **Many games claim to have pioneered the survival-horror genre but, while others came before it, *Project Firestart* is one of the very best and is still supremely enjoyable today.** Your task is to dock with a research vessel in space and find out why there's been no communication. From the start, when you see the body of a dead crewmember who has written the word "danger" in their own blood, you know it's going to be an incredibly tense mission with plenty of twists and turns. Throughout the ship are mutilated bodies, log reports, even a survivor; then you encounter the terrifying invisible enemies, which randomly appear. Multiple endings guarantee regular returns to that hellish place.

ZAK MCKRACKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS

- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** LUCASARTS
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MANIAC MANSION

10 **It's only fair to list one of Lucasarts' excellent games. But we can already hear a great disturbance, as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, due to our choice.** Yes, we could have listed *Maniac Mansion*, but everyone knows *Maniac Mansion*. *Zak McKracken* is arguably just as good, and the journalistic setting struck a chord in the office. Traversing the entire globe Zak encounters aliens disguised with Groucho Marx style nose-glasses and cowboy hats. Throw into the mix wacky sidekicks, a bus which travels to mars, plus some bitingly witty newspaper headlines, and you have one hell of a crazy adventure.

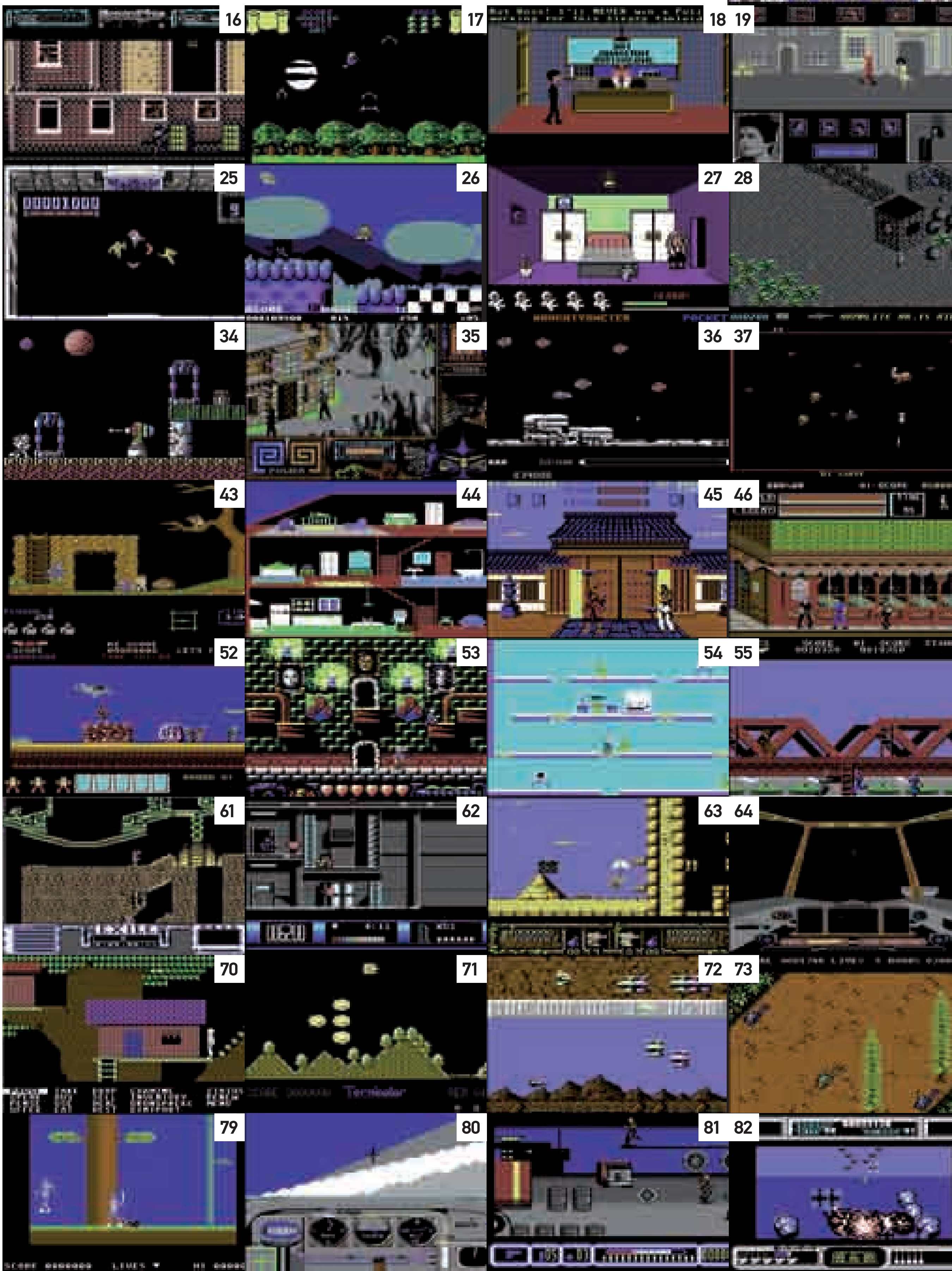






commodore 64 and the rest...

Loved by all who were fortunate enough to own one (and coveted by those who weren't) Commodore's C64 is one of gaming's greatest success stories and boasts a stunning array of classic titles. How many did you own?



01 ARCHON
02 HARD HAT MACK
03 JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL
04 SKATE OR DIE!
05 WORMS?
06 KUNG-FU MASTER
07 RICK DANGEROUS
08 WIZBALL
09 YIE AR KUNG FU II
10 TURRICAN
11 STREET FIGHTER II
12 OUTRUN
13 A VIEW TO A KILL
14 DOUBLE DRAGON III
15 THE NEW ZEALAND STORY
16 ROBOCOP
17 CAULDRON
18 ZAK MCKRACKEN
19 BACK TO THE FUTURE
20 GHOSTBUSTERS
21 PARADROID
22 LAZY JONES
23 TRON
24 YIE AR KUNG FU
25 SMASH TV
26 MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
27 JACK THE NIPPER
28 ARNIE
29 G.I. JOE
30 FORBIDDEN FOREST
31 DIEHARD
32 DIZZY
33 ALIEN 3
34 EXOLON
35 LAST NINJA 3
36 R-TYPE
37 ROBOTRON 2084
38 GOLDEN AXE
39 LAZER SQUAD
40 RAINBOW ISLANDS
41 M.U.L.E
42 1942
43 GHOULS 'N GHOSTS
44 LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE
45 STREET FIGHTER
46 VIGILANTE
47 WONDERBOY
48 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
49 CARGO
50 CHOPLIFTER
51 STRIDER
52 RYGAR
53 THE ADDAMS FAMILY
54 IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
55 RUSH'N ATTACK
56 BATMAN
57 CHUCKIE EGG
58 METAL GEAR
59 CASTLEVANIA
60 - 720 DEGREES
61 EXILE
62 LETHAL WEAPON
63 CJ'S ELEPHANT ANTICS
64 STARFOX
65 NINJA WARRIORS
66 XOR
67 GUN SMOKE
68 RAMPAGE
69 DAN DARE
70 BELOW THE ROOT
71 TERMINATOR
72 SANXION
73 RETURN OF THE JEDI
74 XENON
75 DEMONS OF OSIRIS
76 NINJA SPIRIT
77 PROJECT FIRESTART
78 THUNDERCATS
79 LEGEND OF KAGE
80 ACE OF ACES
81 DIEHARD 2
82 AFTERBURNER
83 GRYZOR
84 ZAXXON
85 WONDERBOY: MONSTER LAND
86 SUPER HANG-ON
87 RAMBO III


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Stage 1
Magic
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ALICE IN WONDERLA
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DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
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CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



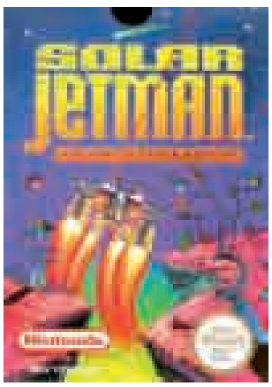
If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted a mint copy of *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles which can be picked up for less than a fiver. *Solar Jetman* costs less than a ride on Blackhole at Alton Towers, but it lasts (almost) forever.



» Casually strolling towards your space pod ready to tempt death. These cutscenes are a nice touch.

SOLAR JETMAN

- » **SYSTEM:** NES
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** TRADEWEST
- » **DEVELOPER:** ZIPPO GAMES

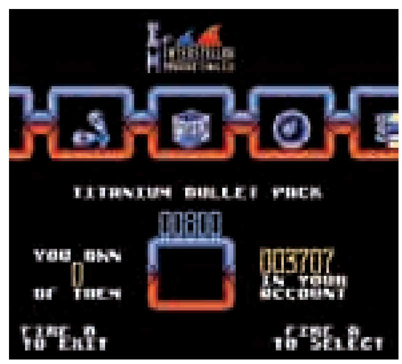


Way back in 1982 there was an Atari arcade game called *Gravitar,* which featured (mostly) realistic gravity and involved piloting a ship around rocky terrain. Sometime after *Gravitar* came *Thrust* on the BBC home computer, which was subsequently ported to various other systems. It worked with the same gravity-based concept, the aim being to navigate (using "thrusters") through various caverns, acquire a pod via tractor beam, and then carry it off into space. Gun turrets could also be engaged in combat, while an attentive eye had to be kept on the fuel supply. From here (along with other titles that borrowed from previous games) was the release of *Oids* on Atari ST around 1987. Tough, action-packed, and something of a cult classic, it saw you rescue androids while again wrestling with Mr Gravity (the bane of real life) who is forever determined to plunge you hurtling and screaming to your death against canyon walls. After these came *Solar Jetman*, which its creators, the ever affable Pickford Brothers, openly admit was inspired by the aforementioned titles.

It's fascinating to chart the origins of various games, especially one as affordable as *Solar Jetman*. Everything is adorned with small touches and there's little roughness around the binary edges. The first thing that strikes you is the well-animated intro sequence – NES games seldom if ever have decent animated intros! It depicts the mothership landing on each planet, followed by the Jetman boarding his craft. Once the game begins you're in control of a pod with thrusters, tasked with descending into caverns to acquire all the pieces to the Golden Warpship, various diamonds, and extra pod parts (like shields). Again the visuals force you to take notice since, rather than a purely functional sprite, your ship is incredibly well animated as it twists and rotates in the vacuum of space.

The same care was taken again with gameplay and the varying effects of gravity. The ship controls smoothly and every thrust of inertia is maintained, while manoeuvring between the rocky outcrops of planet surfaces. One can't help but shout with glee, as the craft veers towards a cliff wall while the thrusters are firing at maximum desperately trying to counteract both gravity and inertia. After much practice players will plan ahead with the thrusters; at suicidal moments the rockets will be engaged while the ship points directly at cliffs, but danger is avoided since inertia applied ages ago changes the trajectory.

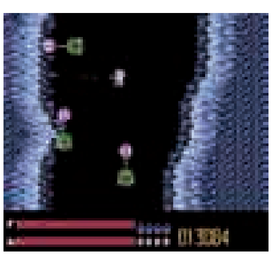
The notion of a simple collect-'em-up might not seem very exciting but the threat of gravity, along with the polished physics and control, put it above other such games and introduce a thrilling tension. Although not the most original game, as already stated, it was one of if not the only game of its type on the NES. It's great fun, despite the difficulty. So when you snap it up today for ultra-super-hyper-cheap, rest assured you're getting a one-of-a-kind (NES) title with plenty to work through.



» Between each level it's possible to visit the Interstellar Marketing Company and purchase essential items.



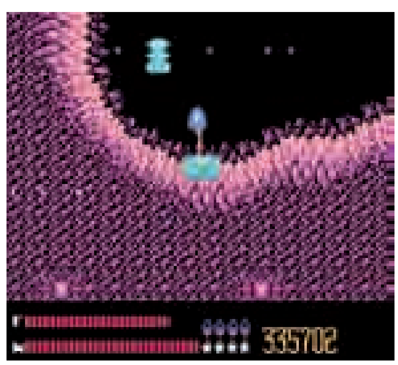
» Shoot! Those gun turrets going to wave hello, they'll kill you and steal your shoes without blinking.



» Stuck in the spacesuit, navigating eerie silent caverns filled with enemies and treasure.

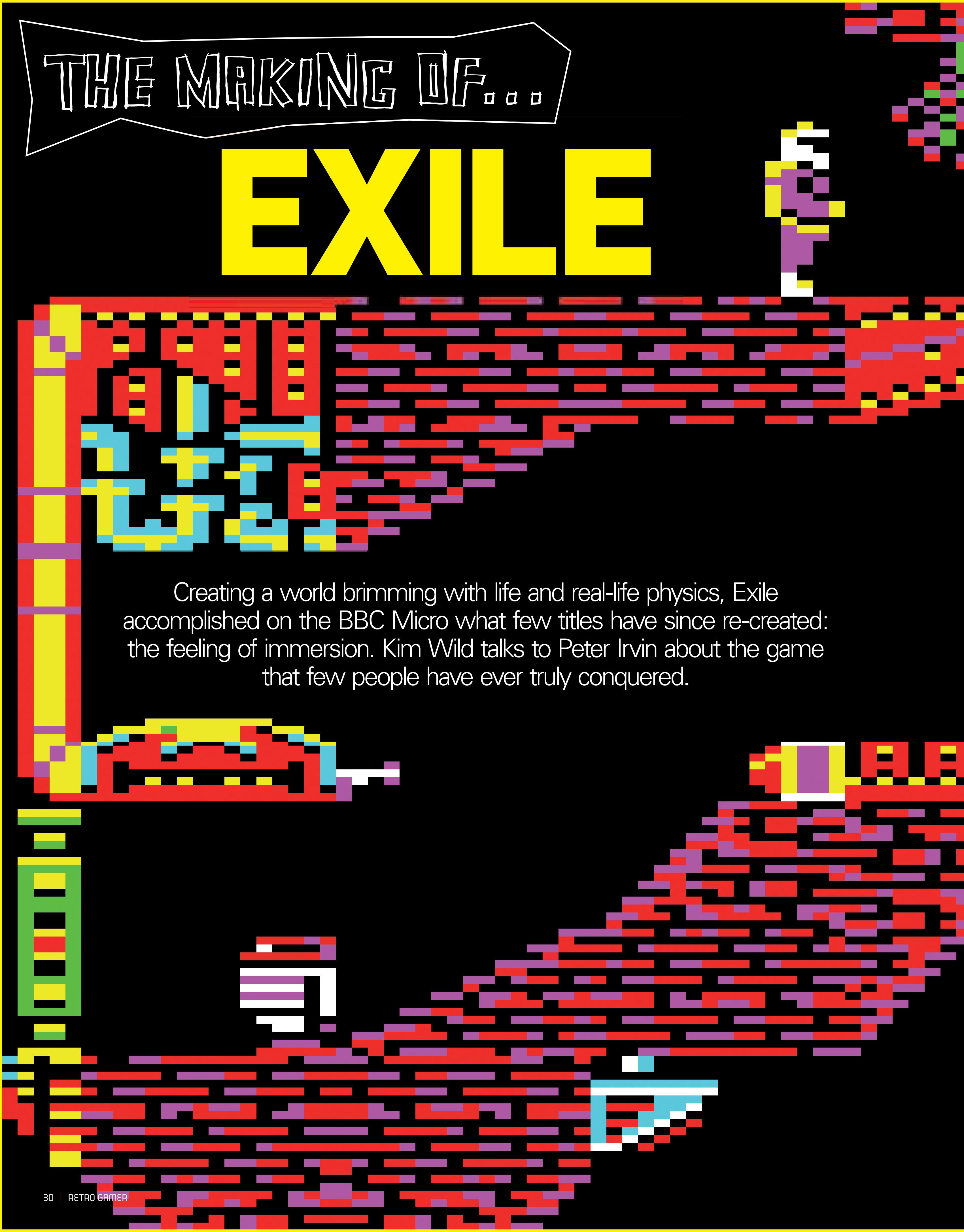


» When your ship is destroyed you have to fly around in this tiny spacesuit with jetpack.



» Items you collect dangle via towrope. They affect your movement and speed, so be careful.

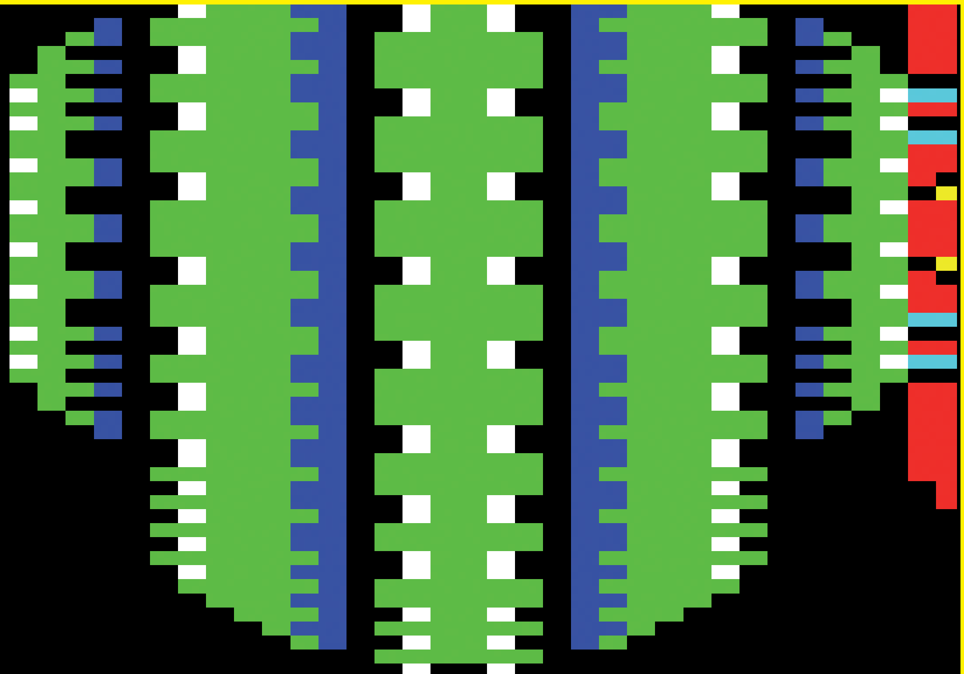
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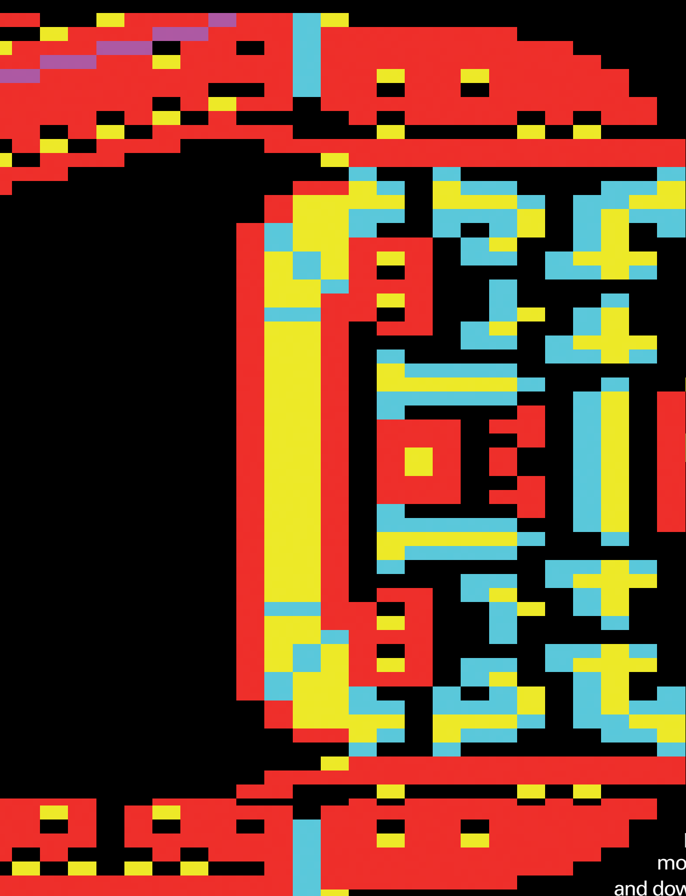


THE MAKING OF...

EXILE

Creating a world brimming with life and real-life physics, Exile accomplished on the BBC Micro what few titles have since re-created: the feeling of immersion. Kim Wild talks to Peter Irvin about the game that few people have ever truly conquered.





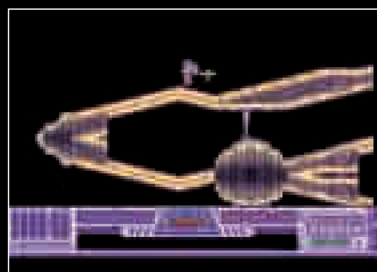
"There are some individuals whose actions mark them as unfit to live within a civilised society. Your crimes have been of a horrifyingly barbaric nature and throughout this trial you have failed to exhibit even the slightest vestige of remorse. Although it gives us no pleasure to pass such a sentence, we must act to protect the innocent. We decree that your presence within this society can no longer be tolerated."

You are Mike Finn, a space hero sent to the surface of planet Phoebus after receiving distress calls from another mission. Upon arrival, Triax (a deranged scientist exiled due to his crimes against humanity) steals the destinator from the ship, leaving you stranded along with any possible survivors. Within moments of exploring the land, you encounter a green bird, harmless but irritating as it dives into you repeatedly. Discovering a grenade, you take it, storing it for future use. A harsh particle wind to the east prevents you from moving so back you go and downwards into the next passage. Once there, a turret gun fires, following your movement and you dive down to safety. A closed door waits, so dropping the grenade, you move away as the explosion destroys the metal structure. More passages and caverns are begging to be explored. Welcome to *Exile*.

ONE GIANT STEP FOR MIKE FINN

Peter Irvin and Jeremy Smith met at school and became friends, both owning a BBC Micro. Of the two, Smith was the first to get a game commercially published: *Space Pirates* and would later release the classic inertia space title *Thrust* for the format, with Irvin becoming known for his eight way shoot-'em-up *Starship Command*. Smith went to Imperial College while Irvin attended Cambridge University and it was after finishing their respective courses there that the duo decided to team up and create a game. "I started a sideways scrolling game which had a wizard exploring a cave – which looked great – but with all the things I had intended to put in it ran out of memory and realized I had to devise a much more efficient way to create and populate the game world. The basis for *Exile* as a man flying around a 2D environment with guns and physics started with that, though of course Jeremy was also playing with similar concepts for his "*Gravitar*" game. The timing was such that I had to decide what to do after University, and coincidently Jeremy was thinking the same – we decided to team up to create *Exile*, so I shelved the Wizard game and adapted the code to do a huge 2D world map. When we started we were just building the technology to see how far we could get with the limited resources available on the BBC Micro before gradually defining what the game would be like."

Very early on, the limitations of the BBC Micro made themselves apparent,

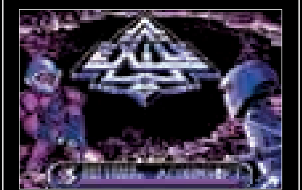


» The Amiga 500/600 version boasted enhanced visuals and featured scrolling messages at the bottom of the screen.



» Oliver Pike managed to complete the BBC Micro version and was issued a certificate from publishers Superior Software.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** SUPERIOR INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** JEREMY C SMITH/ PETER J M IRVIN
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **GENRE:** SIMULATION GAME
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

STARSHIP COMMAND
SYSTEMS: BBC MICRO
YEAR: 1983

FRONTIER: ELITE II
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1993

DARXIDE
SYSTEMS: SEGA 32
YEAR: 1996

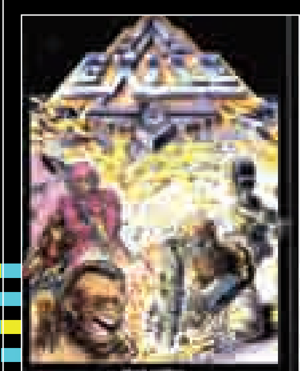


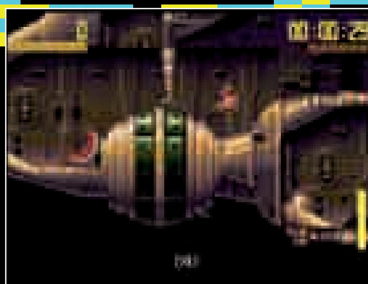
THE MAKING OF... EXILE

"IT SURPRISES ME EVEN NOW THAT EXILE COULD EXIST IN SUCH A SMALL RAM FOOTPRINT" PETER IRVIN

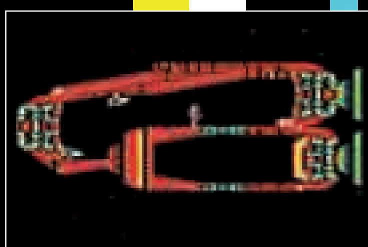
A TALE FROM OUTER SPACE

Extracts from the *Exile* novella: "Once a planet was located, an initial unmanned probe (known colloquially as a dwarfie) would establish whether there was any possibility of it supporting human life. If this proved favourable, a manned probe would follow to explore the new discovery in more detail. These were the Columbus Probes. One such follow-up craft was the 'Pericles'. When a dwarfie returned favourable data from a large planet, the 'Pericles' was launched on the long journey to the new world, named Phoebus. Its mission: to investigate and to report"
"Sprake led a party out to begin their preliminary exploration. Professor Spiegel refused to come. He had taken an irrational dislike to the planet, based on the fact that the dwarfie hadn't registered the winds and what he called 'intuition... a feeling that we will have trouble here'."
For the full version, visit www.inventivity.co.uk





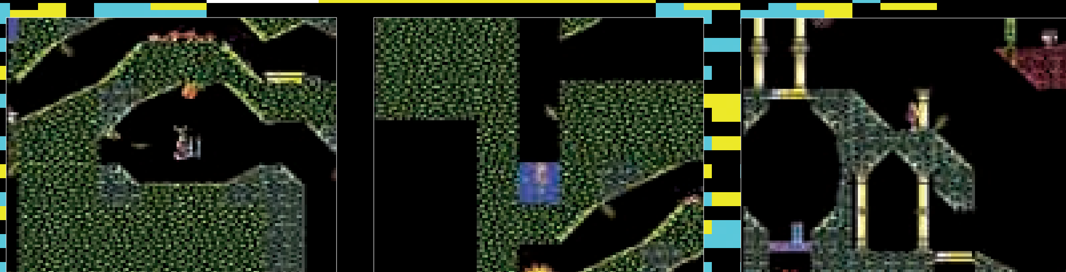
» This comes from the Amiga 1200, with a distinctly different graphical style and extra areas.



» The start of the adventure. What you can't see is the stars changing colour, twinkling in space.

with *Exile* having to be programmed around the meagre 32K RAM, a technical achievement that still impresses its co-creator. "It surprises me even now that *Exile* could exist in such a small RAM footprint. *Exile* is to a large extent an academic exercise in writing compact code and data structures. The biggest drawback was the version control – there wasn't any then. We had to write down on bits of paper which functions we'd had to alter, and in which of the 15 or so modules it was in, and then when it came to merging our separate changes it was a long session of careful cut and paste." There were several elements that had the power been available, Irvin would have loved to have included. "One thing we wanted to have was smoother terrain (which was done on the later 16-bit versions) and modifiable terrain (e.g. blowing holes in the rock)."

Despite being a space based game, *Exile* is a collage of vibrant colours, giving life to a world inhabited by seemingly intelligent creatures. Although other formats would revamp the game's look, there is something magical about the colourful style that remains impressive today. Yet while many games have artists to craft the worlds within, *Exile*'s environment was entirely down to programming. "Jeremy and I did them all – there was no budget to pay for artists, and the way the graphics were implemented (the size of each graphic defined the collision box, and thus affected various puzzles) meant that it would have been very time consuming to specify what each sprite should be" explains Irvin. "The overall design was limited by the programming, which is kind of opposite to what happens in games today. The graphics are as reduced and limited as possible so that the RAM use is a minimal." *Exile* was also one of the first BBC Micro games to make use of speech although this was something of an afterthought rather than meticulous planning. "The background speech was implemented late in the development of the game and was really featured due to boredom at that stage in development. It was actually very quick to implement and not too much RAM used. I think it ended up at just two or four possible volume levels to do the speech waveform which was pumped out under interrupt control at a relatively low rate. The quality wasn't that great, of course, but it was an interesting effect



» An early puzzle: 1) Throw beaker beyond closing door, warp outside, retrieve 2) Fill with water 3) Place on closed door above flames, open door, quench fire, then retrieve Electronic Key device.



» These birds are deeply irritating and block your path, but they can be useful later on by eating wasps.



» Taken from the Amiga version, whose graphics were painted by Herman Serrano.

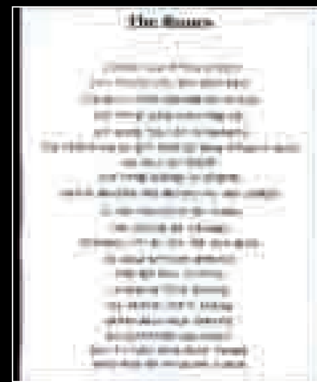
beyond the usual beeps from the sound system on the BBC micro, and you could understand it – if you knew what it said!"

What made *Exile* stand apart was its physics engine based on real life gravity and inertia. Objects would bounce upon ground contact and collide with others, holding a heavy rock would slow down Finn's speed; wind drafts repel Finn in different directions. Most impressive of all is Finn's movement, floating around in a manner expected of a space environment. Yet this aspect of *Exile*, turned out to be the easiest to program. "We both had a strong maths education, so the physics wasn't difficult except in balancing all the effects to work together properly (e.g. what coefficients of restitution for different mass objects – i.e. how fast to rebound off other things) and without using up much RAM or being slow" comments Irvin. "This was actually one of the most interesting bits to implement. The physics code was re-written several times to make it faster or to deal with new game features that required it." The remarkable physics engine combined with the intense puzzling of Mike Finn's escapades has yet to be replicated.

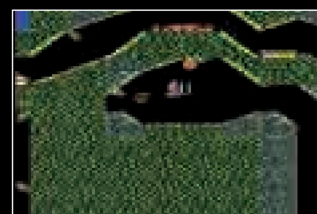
While the sheer size of the world is initially overwhelming, the variety of caverns, passages and creatures to encounter meant that exploration was the key to progress. Incredibly difficult, the multitude of puzzles had different solutions, giving the game a non linear approach and the feeling of liberation that makes *Exile* such a compelling experience. The inability to die, merely re-spawning at the last teleport spot, added to the illusion of freedom and allowed players to take risks with their puzzle solving. Despite this, few have made it to the end, and even less have rescued all survivors, but those that have can rightfully be proud of the colossal achievement. The inclusion of hidden messages throughout the game such as 'She wants you badly' and 'You have killed Triax' were "partly to keep the hackers amused, and keep people guessing that there were things still to do in the game."

Creatures ranging from monkeys, birds, wasps and robots would hinder progress to various sections, and guns integrated in the scenery fired upon approach. Wasps would swarm, birds follow into the deepest depths of Phoebus, others simply turn away once left alone. The different approaches each species would use gave the impression of thinking ability, not computer generated images. Irvin explains a little of how this was accomplished. "There were a set of powerful high level functions that were available for each object's tactics/strategy code to use – like one that did "move towards the last seen position of the object I'm following by walking on the ground", or "fire my weapon at the nearest enemy type", though it is more sophisticated that this. Each object had "state" to keep track of what it is doing, and this is updated occasionally or according to various events that happen. Subroutines for tactics code were shared by various objects, so for instance a robot motion function would also be used by the crabs. This way memory was saved."

Interestingly, the novella that accompanied the game was conceived as a method to discourage piracy, although its inclusion also added value to the overall package. Written by Mark Cullen in conjunction with the game's authors, the novella added immersion to what was already an atmospheric experience, setting the scene for the game nicely. Sadly, the novella would not see life on the Amiga and Atari ST, with the story briefly re-written to keep the premise intact. "We had no control over this decision – I think it would have been better to keep the original story available for people to read if they so wished" remarks Irvin. "However, the BBC micro audience was probably more cerebral than the later mass market Amiga audience because the BBC micro was meant to be an educational machine before being a games machine." The other main copy protection method was in the way the game was programmed. If a copied or cracked version was detected, certain elements would malfunction, making it impossible to complete.



» The cryptic runes printed on the back of the novella contained important clues for the game's completion

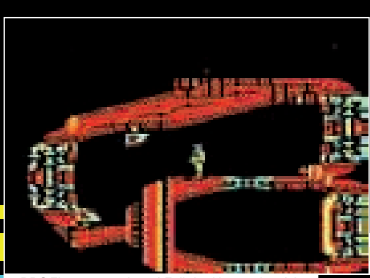


» Puzzles are an integral part to *Exile*. Getting the urn out of the room requires some thought combined with quick reflexes.

"THE OVERALL DESIGN WAS LIMITED BY THE PROGRAMMING, WHICH IS KIND OF OPPOSITE TO WHAT HAPPENS IN GAMES TODAY"
PETER IRVIN

LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS

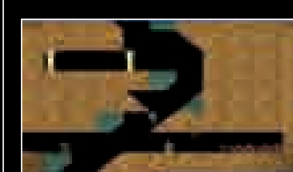
The success of the BBC Micro version meant that conversions to other computer formats were inevitable. *Exile* would see itself on the Acorn Electron, C64, Amiga, Atari ST and CD32, all offering the same epic world but with some alterations. The Electron version saw Finn's space suit change colour to yellow instead of magenta and Triax is cyan rather than green while other graphical changes were down to the Electron's less powerful hardware. "We did the conversion for the C64" explains Irvin. "We paid for some people to do an initial direct conversion from BBC assembler to 68000 (as we had no



» BBC Electron version of *Exile* had less colourful visuals but gameplay remained the same.

EXILE RESURRECTION

Over the years, several people have tried to remake *Exile* for the PC although several of the projects have now closed down. One which was recently revived is by Symo (I S Storr) who has uploaded a beta demo on his website and does work on XP despite the doubts expressed in the readme. Quite a few features have yet to be implemented – there isn't any sound during play (although the files are available separately in the zip file) and it isn't possible to get/store objects into your inventory. It's coming along well – the movement of Finn is close to the original although the player sprite leaves much to be desired (to be replaced at some stage) although the bugs that allow you to get trapped under certain platforms are frustrating.
To download the demo, visit www.symo.clara.net/exile/
For an exhaustive resource on Exile and game creator interviews visit http://www.exile.acornarcade.com/index.html



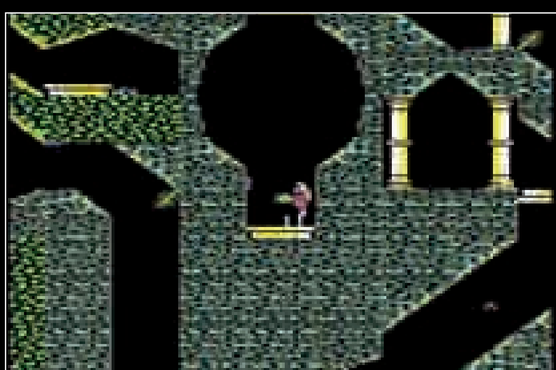
"THE PHYSICS CODE WAS RE-WRITTEN SEVERAL TIMES TO MAKE IT FASTER OR TO DEAL WITH NEW GAME FEATURES THAT REQUIRED IT" PETER IRVIN



» The BBC Micro had three versions: BBC B cassette, BBC B 5.25" disc and BBC Master Compact 3.5" disc version.



» The physics impact everything on Phoebus. Jerking will cause the water to fall out of the urn.



» With the fire out, it's possible to collect the RCD, useful for opening certain electronic doors.

experience in this platform) and did the other improvements ourselves from this starting point."

Exile fan William Reeve who had just finished programming *Pipeline* on the BBC Micro, was responsible for the acclaimed Amiga version and also converted the Atari ST title. "The graphics were redone by a professional artist (Herman Serrano) supplied by the publisher (Audiogenic)" comments Irvin. Improving the graphics provided its own memory problems despite the superior technology and is the reason why the A500/600 version was just a straight port with enhanced visuals. The Atari ST version was faster than its Amiga counterpart and slightly better to look at overall. In 1995 the Amiga 1200 would see an AGA release, this time by Tony Cox, offering a revamped look and extra areas. The CD32 edition was based on the Amiga 1200 version, with the graphics 50% zoomed in to fit a console environment which in itself threw up some scrolling problems during programming and limitations of memory. In order to compensate, a high amount of compression was used for the save game file.

Although the multi-format conversions keep all gameplay features intact, it's the BBC Micro version that remains the most popular. "I think the 16-bit versions were better than the 8-bit versions, though they have less of an impact in people's minds on these platforms because the BBC version really did stretch the limits for the machine. Some people that had already played the BBC version and then played the Amiga version preferred the BBC version."

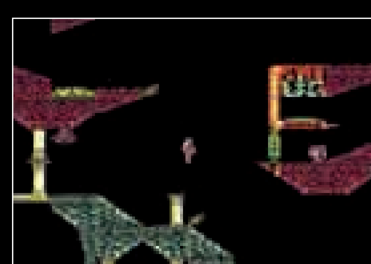
TO INANITY AND BEYOND!

Jeremy Smith went on to work as a graphics artist for games like *Supercars* at Magnetic Fields before joining Core Design and producing titles like *Wonderdog*. Sadly, Jeremy Smith passed away shortly after in 1992, leaving Peter to reminisce about the talented programmer. "It was good to work with Jeremy on *Exile* – at that time it would have been too difficult to do such a game without some kind of team support. It was not difficult to split the work between us, and it was great to have someone turn up with a chunk of code that just slots in and suddenly makes a big change."

After *Exile*, Peter Irvin worked on 3D design for *Frontier Elite II* on the Amiga and Atari ST before developing Sega 32x title *Darxide* with Frontier Developments, a shoot-'em-up that was released at the end of the machine's life span. Nowadays, Peter Irvin runs Inventivity (www.inventivity.com) working on titles for mobile devices.

A sequel for *Exile* was never in the pipeline, leaving Mike Finn resigned to exploring Phoebus for over 15 years, still offering a captivating experience for those who stumble across it. Those interested in seeing the hapless space hero return to Phoebus should keep an eye on Irvin's website for updates. "Strangely, I was recently contracted to implement a version of *Exile* as a demo for a big mobile phone chipset supplier – for the Broadcom 2702 Game Framework. This was a bizarre experience having to go back to the old game and produce a version of *Exile* in C (The Amiga AGA version). I hope this actually gets put on the client's customers' phones as *Exile* really works well on these mobile platforms – the small screen works well, and the gameplay with *Exile* can be dropped and picked up without problem – which really is a requirement on these devices. I have decided that I might as well do something with the new code and put it on other phone platforms too – like Nokia Series 60, and Microsoft Windows Mobile devices – watch this space!"

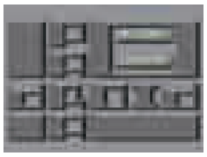
Thanks to Peter Irvin for talking to us. Credit to Hall of Light (http://hol.abime.net/) for the box scans.



» Even today, the variety of colours used makes planet Phoebus a fascinating place to explore.

PARADROID

DROID DESTRUCTION WITH A STING IN ITS TAIL



- » **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

HISTORY



Atmosphere and suspense are the hallmarks of a great game, but programmers don't need the latest whiz-bang console to achieve such things, as many chunk-o-vision games from the Eighties prove. When it comes to suspense, Andrew Braybrook's *Paradroid* (depicted here in its prettier 'Heavy Metal' incarnation from 1989) is a strong contender for the mid-Eighties crown, due to its 'what's around the corner?' gameplay.

Overhead shoot-'em-ups were common during gaming's early days, but Braybrook's experimentation with line-of-sight viewing very nearly gave *Paradroid* an added dimension, providing an almost 3D-like quality to proceedings. As you attempted to clear a space freighter's decks of unruly, malfunctioning robots, you never knew whether you'd turn a corner and be faced with a wimpy Unit-type 123 disposal robot (which could be dispatched even with your influence device's meagre weaponry) or a psychotic, tough, trigger-happy Unit-type 821 security droid.

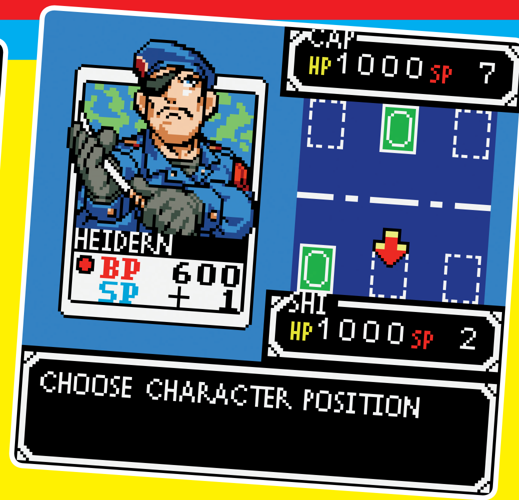
In an era of largely straightforward blasters, *Paradroid* forced players to strategise. The aforementioned influence device could, via successful completion of a sub-game, enable you to take temporary control of any droid. However, if you stayed fixed for too long, your host 'burned out', leaving the influence device vulnerable. You therefore had to balance using the most powerful droids to swiftly clear tougher decks, rapidly changing hosts, and ensuring a few weedy robots were 'spared', in case a swift retreat was called for.

One aspect of the game also highlights Braybrook's wry sense of humour (this being the man who created a long-winded 'speed up any game' type-in listing for Zzap!64 that merely displayed 'April Fool' once you'd gone to the trouble of keying it in): once a freighter is cleared, the influence device is beamed aboard a new, tougher ship; eventually, you board the monstrously difficult 'Itsnotardenuff'; if you clear that, make the most of your few seconds of glory, because you're repeatedly put back on 'Itsnotardenuff' until you get destroyed, run out of energy, or lose the will to live.




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SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS CLASH

Publisher: SNK
Developer: In-House
Released: 1999
Featured Format: Neo Geo Pocket Color
Expect to pay: £3+ (cart only)

CHARACTERS FROM SNK AND CAPCOM JOINED TOGETHER SEVEN YEARS AGO TO CREATE ONE OF THE MOST ADDICTIVE GAMES EVER MADE, AND YET NOT A SINGLE PUNCH WAS THROWN. JOIN RETRO GAMER AS WE LOOK BACK AT ONE OF THE NEO GEO POCKET'S GREATEST TITLES.



DOUBLE TROUBLE

Keen to capitalise on the success of *Pokémon*, SNK's *Card Fighters* also came in two different versions: Capcom and SNK. As with *Pokémon* Red and Blue it was impossible to collect all 300 cards unless you linked up to another player and traded with them. Not only did this ensure that you'd interact with other gamers to obtain difficult to find cards, it also convinced the more die-hard fans to buy both versions of the game from the very beginning. Apart from different starting locations and certain cards being specific to each version, the two games were more or less identical.

When SNK first announced *SNK VS Capcom: Card Fighters Clash* it sounded (to us at least) like a disaster of gargantuan proportions. Granted, it was set to feature a staggering array of classic and obscure characters from the back catalogues of the two Japanese giants, but considering the beat-'em-up heritage the duo boasted, the idea of a *Pokémon*-styled RPG with card-based elements sounded like the craziest proposal since Sir Clive first wheeled out his Sinclair C5. Once *Card Fighters* finally appeared though, not only were we forced to eat a huge slice of humble pie, we became so horrifically addicted that we're still religiously playing it to this day.

With the advantage of hindsight it's easy to see why *Card Fighters* turned out to be such an amazing game and subsequently, why it never managed to achieve the huge audience it deserved. First and foremost was the fact that it was an exclusive for SNK's Neo Geo Pocket Color, thus ensuring that it was never going to reach the same sort of games buying public that Nintendo's Game Boy titles were privy to. A shame, but with SNK fighting tooth and claw for the little slice of the handheld market it had, it obviously made no sense for it at the time to release what is arguably one the system's best games on a rival's handheld. Of course, the upside to releasing *Card Fighters* on a less popular console was that when you did discover it, it made you feel all the more special – as if you'd just entered an exclusive members club, usually reserved for the rich and famous.

'But what makes *Card Fighters* so special?', we hear you ask. Simple, as Game Freak had done with its excellent *Pokémon* games, SNK had created a title that was simple to learn, encouraged the player to explore as much of the game world as possible and, most importantly, had created a game that really came into its own when you played against a second player. In short it was SNK's very own answer to the unstoppable juggernaut that was *Pokémon*, and loyal fans lapped it up.

Another contribution to *Card Fighters*' success was the actual collaboration itself. While it wasn't the first time that the two publishers had joined forces – Capcom's very first arcade game *Vulgus* featured SNK input – the new announcement managed to garner a lot of attention, especially from beat-'em-up fans (although it would be a few months later before a proper dedicated



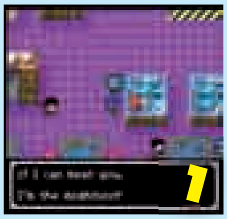
» He's one of the coolest *Street Fighter* characters ever created and has a kick-ass ability to boot



» There are plenty of locations to visit, we every one offering plenty of chances for battle

HOW TO PLAY

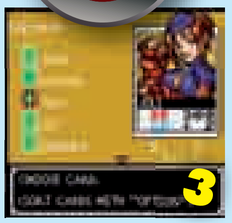
The Retro Gamer's guide to enjoying *Card Fighters Clash*



Daz is challenged by last year's winner Shin, and after a brief animated sequence, the game moves over to the *Card Fighters'* play arena.



Shin plays Lee Pylon and gains 5 soul points. Note, you can only have three characters in play at any one time and can't attack on your first turn.



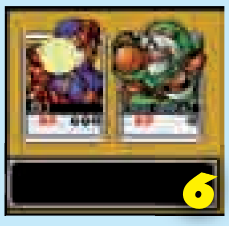
Daz checks his hand and decides on Juli. He makes this decision basically because he'll be able to back her up with Juni on the next turn.



It's back to shin and after laying Chin Gensai he attacks with Lee Pylon. Because Daz refuses to counter he's immediately dealt 200 points by Lee.



Daz plays E.Honda and uses Juni to back-up Juli, taking her BP from 300 to 600. Daz goes on the attack and Shin must defend with Chin Gensai.



Chin Gensai loses to Juli. Juli 200 points, but kills Chin Gensai. If Juli had attacked with a second character, any left over damage would transfer to Shin.



» This is the first character you face. Luckily, he's pretty easy to beat. Your reward is a Chun-Li card



» The dust dragon is Capcom's homage to Forgotten Worlds. Can you spot any more?

one-on-one fighter appeared). Despite being created in-house by SNK, Capcom's input is evident. No other company – with the possible exception of Sega and Nintendo – shows as much awareness of its back catalogue as Capcom and the knowing nods to classic characters and games – some recent, many ancient – drew squeals of delight from the Capcom and SNK fanboys. Ultimately though, a game that requires you to constantly replay it in order to progress needs to be blessed with a robust, accessible, gameplay hook that never becomes dull. It needs to be simple, yet offer depth, it has to feature intelligent AI that continually builds as the game progresses and, above all, it needs to be a hell of a lot of fun. *Card Fighters* succeeds on all these counts, and then some.

While *Card Fighters* does feature exploration, it's not in the same league as Game Freak's sprawling *Pokémon* RPG's. Indeed, you only have five different sites to explore and each location is filled with plenty of card players to battle against, along with subtle references to past Capcom and SNK games: the music that plays in the Lost World shop for example is the main soundtrack from Capcom's *Forgotten World*,

> YOU HAVE FIVE DIFFERENT SITES TO EXPLORE AND EACH LOCATION IS FILLED WITH PLENTY OF CARD PLAYERS

WHO'S WHO?

Sure you've seen some of *Card Fighters SNK* heroes before but can't quite place your finger on where? Allow us to help out.



MARCO

From the original *Metal Slug* and can be backed up by Eri, Tarma or Fio. His special ability allows you to discard a card, which deals 100 points of damage to all other character in play.



CHARLOTTE

This lass harks from the *Samurai Shodown* games and can be backed up by Blue Mary, King or Haomaru. Sadly, she's not very powerful and has no special ability. She is rather cute though.



YURI

Yuri is from the *Art Of Fighting* franchise and can be backed up by Ryo, Robert and Takuma. While she's relatively weak, her skill of robbing an opponent of 3 SP shouldn't be sniffed at.



TERRY

This baseball-cap-wearing fighter is one of SNK's most recognisable brawlers and can be backed up by brother Andy. He never freezes after an attack, so is the perfect defender.



KAEDE

Kaede is the gender-shifting hero of *The Last Blade* and can be backed up by kaede and Akari. While he has good power, the downside is that he continually leaches your SP.



» Who would have thought that so many hours of gaming goodness could be crammed into one cart?

while one of the locations you can explore is Resident Evil Mansion. The locations may be small, but they're filled with all sorts of little gimmicks to discover (some crane machines can be played to earn cards for example)

WHEN YOU GET TOO MANY USELESS CARDS, YOU CAN TRADE THEM IN AT THE TRADING MACHINES FOR NEW ONES

and there's always ample opportunity to find new players and cards.

Ah yes, the cards. While the exploration sections feature the sort of identikit visuals that have appeared in countless Japanese RPGs, the cards themselves are beautifully illustrated, and despite their static imagery, burst with character. Each hero has been lovingly depicted as a super-deformed character – giant head, wide eyes and small body – and despite the cute look are instantly recognisable. Of course, due to the sheer amount of characters that SNK and Capcom came up with, it's quite possible that you're never going to recognise all of them, but that matters not one jot. They've all been crafted with such care and attention, you'll be eager to track down their original sprite-based incarnations – if only so you can see what they originally looked like.

Of course, while the cards are indeed beautiful to look at, they serve a fair more important role than just eye candy, and you soon discover that they become the driving force behind *Card Fighters'* frightfully addictive gameplay. While cards can be found in certain locations, traded with certain in-game characters (and from real life players via the system link) and bought from shops, the biggest rewards are earned by beating other players.

Depending on the abilities of your opponent, it's possible to earn anything from three to five new cards to add to your ever-increasing collection. As the game progresses, you'll find yourself earning more and more duplicates of cards that you already own, and while this can initially frustrate, it's instantly forgotten when you finally discover that one card you've been desperately searching for – say one that's based on Capcom's *Strider*… Oh, and when you get too many useless cards, you can simply trade them in at the trading machines for new ones.

While wandering around, beating other players and gaining the odd cool card is fun, *Card Fighters* doesn't really come into

WHO'S WHO?

The Capcom characters have appeared in a greater range of games than their SNK counterparts, so here are some of our favourites.



HIRYU

Hiryu is from *Strider* and is backed up by his options. While he can KO any character receiving back-up we're not sure it was worth the 36 hours it took for Darran to unlock him.



FALCON

Falcon appears courtesy of *Power Stone* and receives able back up from Ayame and Rouge. At the cost of randomly discarding a card, he can give any of your heroes 300 extra BP.



LEON

Leon most recently appeared in *Resident Evil 4* and receives back up from Jill and Claire. His handy Confinement skill stops the enemy from using action cards in their next turn.



MEGA MAN

Roll and Rush can back the mighty Mega Man up. Use his special skill to rob an opponent of their own special power and then laugh maniacally when they start crying.



RYU

Ryu's special ability of dealing 100 points to all enemies is particularly deadly. The blue-haired hero hails from *Breath Of Fire* and he's backed up by Nina.



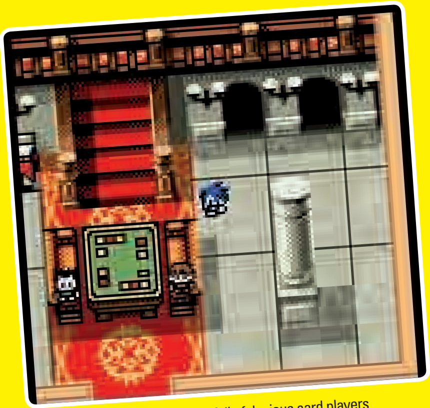
MORRIGAN

Morrigan's Goodnight Kiss nets you a huge amount of SP – it's also a great way of getting rid of weakened characters in order to play new ones. She's backed up by Lilith.

ROUND 2: FIGHT!



SNK VS Capcom: Card Fighters 2 Expand Edition appeared in 2001 and was a vast improvement on the original game (providing of course that you understood Japanese). As well as 40 characters to collect and a smattering of new action cards, the biggest enhancements were the new reaction cards. Whereas the originally *Card Fighters* only allowed you to use action cards in your own turn, reaction cards enabled you to play when your opponent attacked. This gave a whole new twist to the core gameplay and made the game even more strategic. Add in the fact that many of the previous cards had been revised so that they now featured abilities and you suddenly had a whole new selection of cards to play around with. Best of all a legal IPS patch now exists that will at least enable you to understand what all the new cards do, even if the main game hasn't actually been translated.



» Resident Evil Mansion is full of devious card players and gruesome zombies. Are you up for the challenge?

its own until you start experimenting with the cards you've collected. Not only does this allow you to make further use of your duplicates (you can stick three identical cards in the same deck) it also reveals just how complex *Card Fighters Clash* actually is. Through clever manipulation of your available cards it's possible to create all sorts of devastating combinations and deck styles that greatly enhance the way each battle plays out. Of course, to successfully do that you have to understand just what each card actually does and how you can best utilise it to your own uses.

Cards are split into two distinct types: Character and Action, with the character cards featuring the following attributes: Battle Points, Soul Points and Back-Up. Battle Points determine the strength of each character, Soul Points get added to your pool when a character card is played and allows you to use action cards – the better the action card, the more points it requires – while Back-Up explains which characters are compatible with each other (see boxout).

Finally, some character cards have special abilities that can be either activated each turn, or take immediate effect when the card first comes into play. Many of the powers mimic the skills of the actual character in question, so Mega Man is able to steal the special power of an opposing character card, while Alex of *Street Fighter III* fame can deliver a stunning head-butt that stops your opponent from using action cards on his following turn. Of course, once you start identifying a card's power – they all have a rating from A, the highest, to D – you can then decide how to integrate it into your deck. And so *Card Fighters* continually evolves, as every card you collect and play has the potential to dramatically alter the core set of rules that you must initially abide by. It's an incredibly organic approach that has easily managed to outdo virtually every other digital card game that's since hit the market (with the possible exception of *Magic: The Gathering Online*) and bodes extremely well for SNK Playmore when it releases its DS version later this year. The fact that a loose cartridge can be picked up for less than a fiver nowadays means that no self respecting gamer should ever miss out on this classic game.

TACTICS, TACTICS

Putting together a new deck? Then make sure you stock any or all of the following

ESCAPE

Not only is Escape great for retrieving weakened characters, it also enables you to immediately play them. Particularly devastating when used with cards like Shermie.



PSYCHE UP

Not all characters boast SP points, so Psyche Up is a great way of ensuring that you'll always be able to play your action cards. Five points for one card is a pretty good trade-off.



ROUND 2

Card replenishing is always useful, especially when you can break its power. Play round 2 when you're down to one card and immediately draw five new cards. Sweet.



SLAUGHTER

It costs a hell of a lot of SP and isn't for the faint of heart, but when used correctly Slaughter can be devastating. Play it at the right moment and your opponent may never recover.



EARTH'S PIKE

Earth's Pike is a great way of breaking a potential stalemate. Any card that can immediately damage your opponent is one to be treasured, especially if it can deal 500 points of damage!



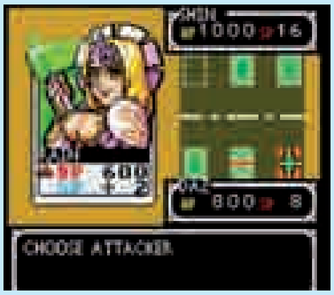
AWAKENING

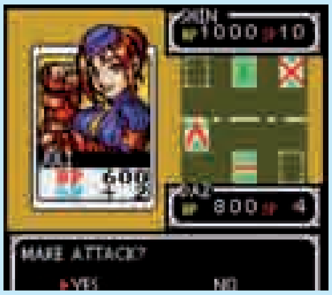
Awakening is great because not only does it allow you to considerably boost a character's BP for very little cost, it's also easy to collect. Stick three of these in your deck and you're laughing.

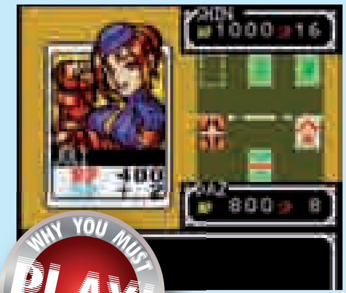


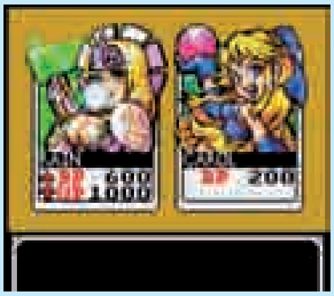
MAGICAL MOMENT

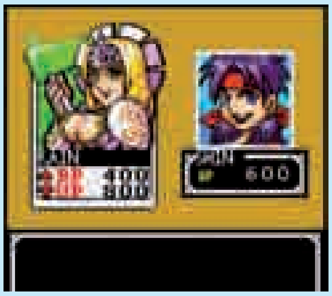
You'll never forget the first time you tag team up against an opponent. Once you have enough SP it's possible to attack with two, or even three characters. Granted, there's no flashy explosions or animated fights to witness, but the satisfaction of taking out your opponent's card is still immense.













THE CLASSIC GAME

SPY vs SPY

Craig Grannell dons his shades, masters his extra-sneaky expression, and practices tiptoeing, thereby getting into the right frame of mind to revisit the second game in First Star Software's Spy Vs Spy series. (Note: this article will self-destruct in ten seconds…)



» Despite their espionage claims, the spies' real motivation became clear when the rather forward woman appeared from the submarine.



» As the black spy seeks the final missile piece, the white spy consults his map, only to discover that he recently walked right past it.

When you've sat through one of the dampest, greyest, most miserable British Augusts in living memory, the thought of a Caribbean island – waves idly lapping at sandy coasts, palm trees offering bountiful supplies of coconuts – seems like bliss. And so it was that I ventured back to one of the finest digital equivalents in retro-land, returning for the first time in many months to the sequel to First Star's smash-hit *Spy Vs Spy*. Suitably entitled *Spy Vs Spy II: The Island Caper*, the game's lush vegetation and sandy beaches put me back in mind of a 'proper' summer as I explored the bright, cheery island, swam in the deep, blue sea, and occasionally paused to stare at a tropical sky dotted with white, fluffy clouds. Of course, I was soon beaten with a sword, yanked from the ground and whisked up a tree by my ankles, shot repeatedly and then blown to pieces by a crude bomb fashioned from a coconut and some fuel from an airplane wreck. But such is life. After all, of the many wonderful places travel agents urge you to visit in the Caribbean, Spy Island definitely isn't one of them.

The reason for this is that Spy Island – long since abandoned by man and beast, and curiously omitted from maps – is no ordinary island. Along with the minor problem of the island being surrounded by hostile, man-eating sharks, it's also home to a crotchety, volatile volcano that has clear plans to imminently erupt, covering the entire island with molten lava. It's also the location of a top-secret XJ4½ missile that recently crash-landed, and which is coveted by the governments of two diametrically opposed factions – and that's where you, the player, come in. Taking on the role of MAD Magazine's black and white spies, each player must scoot around the island, searching for missile parts, while leaving booby-traps to obstruct the enemy spy (see 'The Trapulator' for the low-down on your potential arsenal) and avoiding traps and natural hazards that



» The white spy struggles to contain his glee as the black spy is blown to pieces by a buried coconut bomb.

sap your energy, such as quicksand and water. (The spies, despite being sneaky, destructive, and unnervingly good at fashioning explosives out of petrol and tropical fruit, can't swim.) Infrequent head-to-head meetings lead to each spy attempting to beat the living daylights out of the other with a strangely blunt sword (and the likely retreat of the first spy whose strength meter falls

ALTHOUGH THE GAME IS UNQUESTIONABLY FUN TO PLAY, SOME MIGHT BE DOUBTING ITS INCLUSION AS A 'CLASSIC GAME'

IN THE KNOW



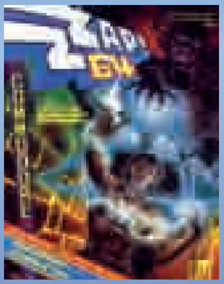
- » **VERSION FEATURED:** C64
- » **DEVELOPER:** MIKE RIEDEL
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** STRATEGY/ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



THEY SAID:

"I WOULD SAY THAT THIS SUCCESSOR IS AS ENJOYABLE TO PLAY AS THE ORIGINAL, IF NOT MORE SO, AND I RECOMMEND IT HEARTILY TO ALL SPY VS SPY LOVERS"

GARY PENN, ZZAP!64 #6, OCTOBER 1985





» **Capturing** the black spy via a snare trap was scant consolation for the white spy, as he'd just stepped on buried napalm.

dangerously low), but the real battle of wits is in trying to outwit your opponent. By burying bombs and setting snare traps, you can cut off escape routes. If you find an 'end' part of the missile, it's often best to bury it, set a trap over it, and seek out the middle part (to which you can attach either of the other two parts). Even if the other spy has the complete missile, all is not lost. If you know the location of the handy escape submarine, you can lay in wait and ambush your foe with a combination of traps and swordplay.

Although the game is unquestionably fun to play, some might be doubting its inclusion in our 'classic game' pages. Despite its wonderfully cartoonish graphics (spies crumble to ash when blown up by bombs and napalm; a gravestone shudders out of the sand when your spy shuffles off this mortal coil; sad little bubbles pop above the sea when a spy meets his demise underwater) and jaunty, summery tune, *Spy Vs Spy II: The Island Caper* isn't the most innovative game out there, and arguably wasn't even that ground-breaking back in the mid-Eighties. After all, the prequel offered similar search-'em-up, spy-bashing gameplay. However, the first game in the series has a rather sterile visual environment that makes it less appealing to many, whereas the sequel's lush surroundings give it a sunnier disposition that contrasts nicely with the cartoonish nastiness of the gameplay.

The Island Caper also has a stronger sense of immediacy and pace about it. The split-screen nature of the game means that winning partly relies on keeping tabs on what your opponent is up to. In the original game, you often end up in a trap/remedy cycle, but the lack of remedies in the sequel ends up making the game more frantic, as it becomes centred on attacking the



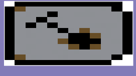
» Run out of time and the volcano erupts, burying both spies under tons of molten lava. Ouch!

opposition, rather than thwarting their attempts to kill you by diffusing their traps. Thankfully, one element of the original game made it to the sequel intact, though: randomness. No two games are ever the same, making *Spy Vs Spy II* one of the many titles from the Eighties that manages to eke out a wealth of variation from a relatively limited set-up.

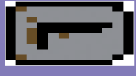
Sadly, the *Spy Vs Spy* series never again managed to reach the heights set by *The Island Caper*. The third instalment, *Arctic Antics*, was essentially more of the same, but set in a barren, soul-less environment (even if it did feature the occasional grumpy polar bear), and the fourth outing, tentatively titled *Spies In Space*, failed to materialise, presumably due to waning interest in the series – and the less said about the recent 3D Xbox 'update', the better. However, the DS, with its dual-screen and networking capabilities, is surely well suited to a remake of the first couple of games in the series. How about it, First Star?

THE TRAPULATOR

Find a spade and you can dig pits for spies to fall into; add a wooden stake, and the pit covers itself, thereby creating a far more cunning and decidedly invisible trap.



There's a hidden gun on each island, which can be used to shoot the enemy spy. Curiously, this causes him to spin round, rather than keel over and die.



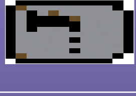
Combine fuel from the airplane wreck with a coconut and bury it to leave a nasty, explosive surprise for any enemy spy unlucky enough to step on it.



Grab some rope, climb a tree, tie the end, climb down and bury the other end; voila – a nasty trap that will whisk any spy who stumbles across it up into the trees!



Curiously, each spy carries a small amount of napalm, which is buried rather like the coconut bombs. Don't try this at home, kids!



The least dangerous of the Trapulator options is the map. Utilise it to discover the location of missile parts and where you've recently visited.





» As the black spy makes a dash for the submarine, the white spy cunningly manages to fall into a pit while pursuing him.

MORE IN THE SERIES

SPY VS SPY
SYSTEMS: C64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 800/XL/XE, MSX, BBC MICRO, ELECTRON, NES, SEGA MASTER SYSTEM, ATARI ST, AMIGA, GAME BOY COLOR
YEAR: 1984-99

SPY VS SPY II: THE ISLAND CAPER
SYSTEMS: C64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 800/XL/XE, APPLE II/+, ATARI ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1985-89

SPY VS SPY III: ARCTIC ANTICS
SYSTEMS: C64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 800/XL/XE, APPLE II/+, IBM PC, ATARI ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1987-89

SPY VS SPY: OPERATION BOOBYTRAP
SYSTEMS: GAME BOY
YEAR: 1992

SPY VS SPY
SYSTEMS: XBOX
YEAR: 2005



NOW SHOWING!

THE MAKING OF...

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT





My coffee sat on the counter, cold as the looks I was getting from the locals. He took the chair beside me. The lines on his forehead told me he knew somethin'. Somethin' big.

"You got some questions for me boy" His voice was dry as the air.

"Maybe. Who's askin'?"

"Name's Riordan. David Riordan. And I know all about the ants."

That got my attention.







PROLOGUE

I was just a kid when I walked into the small mining town of Lizard Breath. I thought I owned the world. I had my life rolled up in a backpack, an Amiga 500 under my arm and a pocket full a' rainbow coloured dreams. Damn, I was naive. But that's how these stories always begin, right? Some guy with a big idea, and some damn fool who believes him.

CHAPTER ONE "THEM AND US"

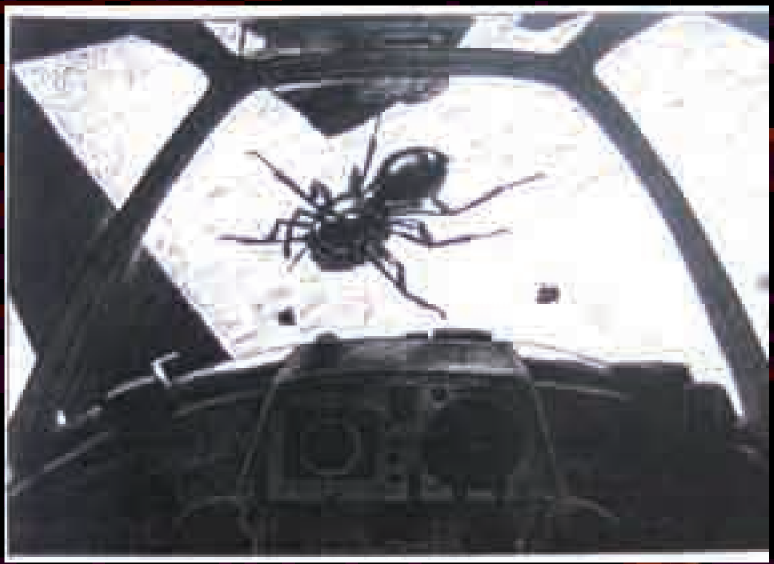
"Bob Jacob's concept of Cinemaware was brilliant. What better way to make interesting games than to do interactive versions of great movies like *Robin Hood*, *Samurai* and the big bug films?"

The tall drink a' scotch in front of me was David Riordan. Some hotshot software guy out of LA who used to work in the movies. You know the kind. Takes the California sun with him, wherever he goes. Well, I'd brought my sunglasses, and I liked to listen as much as he liked to talk. I needed answers, and this was the kinda guy who loved to give 'em. I asked him where he came from and where he was headed.

"While doing a new media research project for Lucasfilm in 1980 I came across the first laserdisc "interactive" movie at MIT and was smitten by the concept of interactive narratives. A bunch of us worked for Atari on laserdisc games for about three years before Atari crashed and burned. A friend showed me *Defender Of The Crown* on the Amiga and I wrote Bob a fan letter. He thought it was odd that I had experience in both linear entertainment and interactive gaming. There weren't many of us with such credentials in those days. We talked and I ended up becoming one of the early employees at Cinemaware."

Cinemaware, huh? I'd heard of those guys. Big players in the software racket. Back in the old days I used to run with the Amiga gang, and Cinemaware owned that town. There were others, sure, but no one messed with Bob Jacob's boys.

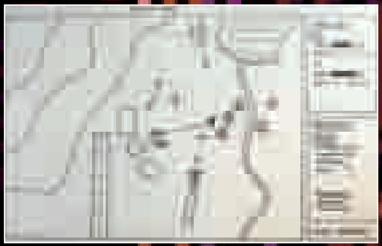
> "GROWING UP I'D BEEN FASCINATED BY THE PULP SCI-FI CREATURE FILMS THAT BEGAN WITH THE CLASSIC FIFTIES FILM 'THEM'" DAVID RIORDAN



» 'A storyboard showing an early concept for the aerial view mini-game.



» Artists concept of the final day when the ants invade the town.



» Designs for the tactical battles between the army (once the player's convinced them to help out), and the advancing hive.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** CINEMAWARE
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** DAVID RIORDAN
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** INTERACTIVE MOVIE ACTION ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** FREE



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ROCKET RANGER
SYSTEMS:
AMIGA, ATARI ST, C64, DOS, NES
YEAR: 1988

LORDS OF THE RISING SUN
SYSTEMS:
AMIGA, ATARI ST, DOS
YEAR: 1988

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, C64, DOS, GAME BOY ADVANCE, MAC, NES, PC
YEAR: 1986



IT CAME FROM THE DESERT





» The final art designs for the infested mining town of Lizard Breath.

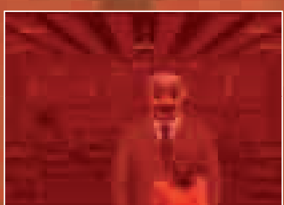


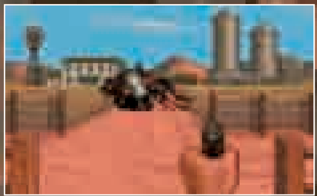
» Artists concept of O'Riordan's bar interior.

THEM AGAIN!

"AntHeads was one of the eight other scenarios we couldn't include in the original *Desert.* When everyone reacted so positively to the first game, we started thinking about a sequel and Randy came up with this idea of using the original environment, but layering in a new story. The technical crew figured out how to do it so players could buy a single disk upgrade to the original game. *AntHeads* took *Desert* to the next logical step. I loved the concept that people would turn into zombie like creatures that would help the ants take over. *AntHeads* won a bunch of game of the year honours. I don't think it was necessarily better; it just built on the appeal of the original in a way the audience really liked. It was almost like the original *Desert* and *AntHeads* were one game, released in a serial fashion."
– David Riordan.







» It takes some sharp shooting to bring down a giant ant. Go for the antennae!



"GIMME YOUR BEST SHOT, LIZARD BREATH. I CAN TAKE IT."

That's the way it was. You accepted it, or you got the hell outta' town.

But it didn't add up. What was some high roller from Cinemaware doin' in a place like Lizard Breath? This guy should be livin' the high life in a downtown condo with a dame for every day 'a the week, not shootin' the gab with a journo on the skids. I poured him another bourbon to oil his chiselled jaw, even though it didn't need oilin'.

"In my first meeting with Bob he asked me what interactive movie I wanted to make. I'd been thinking about creature films so I just said "big bugs." It was the one story he hadn't thought of and he hired me as a result. Growing up I'd been fascinated by the pulp sci-fi creature films that began with the classic Fifties film *Them*. I loved the pulp fiction, the bad special effects and the beautiful screaming girls. When I began to think about what kind of stories would lend themselves to interactive narratives, big ants attacking a small town seemed like such a natural fit. It was fun and campy at the same time. You didn't have to explain too much about what to do. You either stopped the ants or you got eaten."

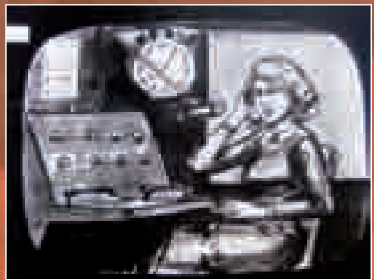
And there it was, eyeballin' me right in the face. The answers to what'd been goin' on in this backwater town: the answers I could see eatin' away at the locals who'd been avoidin' me. You might think they was unfriendly, but that's too simple. It was fear that kept them quiet, and I knew all about that.

I was warmin' to the guy, so I asked Riordan how he got started – how this town wound up the way it was. Besides – who ain't unfriendly these days?

CHAPTER TWO: "THIS TOWN AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE BOTH OF US."

"Because of my training in linear storytelling and television production I tackled *Desert* like a movie first and then defined what the gaming elements would be. I needed to 'live' in the story a bit before I could figure out what would make it a fun action-adventure game.

I wrote an initial document that described the town, some of the characters and potential gaming situations. I had crude storyboards created to give a feel of what I was thinking about and then very early on I got screenwriter Ken Melville involved and we began fleshing out all the characters just like we were creating a story bible for a film. It was Ken who gave Lizard Breath and its inhabitants their dramatic flavour and pulp colour."



» Storyboard for the scenes inside the local radio station, KBUG Radio.

So I was in Melville's imagination, huh? Figures.

So who's this new guy? What's his connection to the ants? It was getting late, and Riordan was ready to walk. I decided to take the grand tour. I had all night, and my ulcer wasn't goin' nowhere. Gimme your best shot, Lizard Breath. I can take it.

"Once Ken and I had an initial story, characters and locations in mind, the lead programmer Randy Platt and I entered into new territory. Designing games for the Amiga platform was very different from laserdisc games where we used very sophisticated video frame jumping techniques in a layered branching matrix to create choices for the players. In Amiga world you could be anywhere at any point in the timeline. This presented story and gameplay opportunities and challenges."

That's a whole lotta fancy words, college boy. But I guess he could tell I used to ride with the Amiga mob. Did he know I was one of those kids who queued up to buy his games, or was he just tryin' to keep me around?

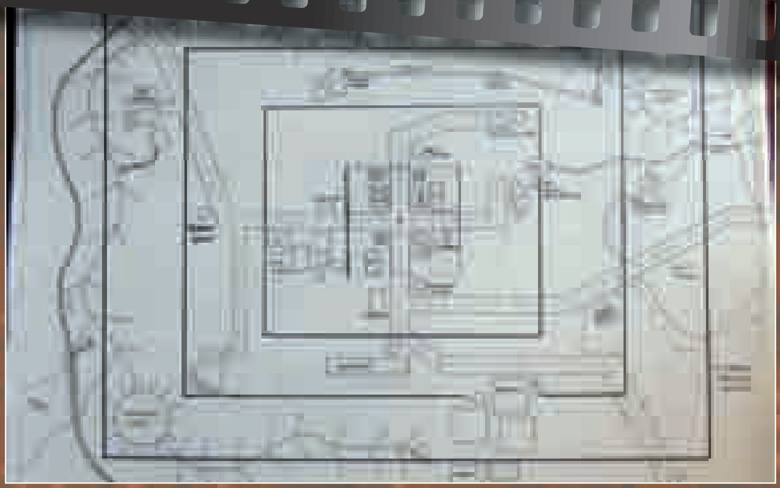
I didn't much care. I needed to know why I couldn't get this damn town outta my mind, no matter how much bad whiskey I poured over it.

"I knew I wanted to experiment with a "real time" environment where, like real life, the player couldn't be in all places at once. It made sense to me that the "impending" doom of big bugs headed towards town was time sensitive. This added to the tension. If the player did nothing or goofed around, the town was overrun. They also needed to pay attention to the clues and outcomes of dramatic situations if they wanted to be in the right place at the right time to stop the ants. It seemed to Ken and I like a good way to make the story elements matter to the gameplay instead of just ending up as window dressing for the game sequences."

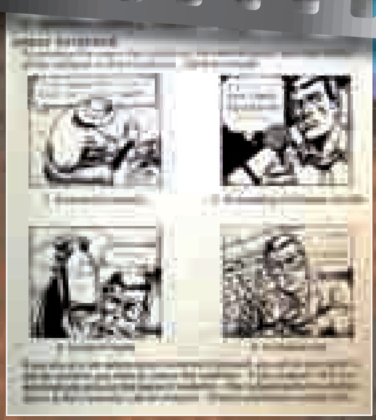
I could tell he was a smart guy, but then again, so could he. He had my ear, and I wasn't in any hurry to get it back.

"I sat down with a map I had made of Lizard Breath on paper and literally

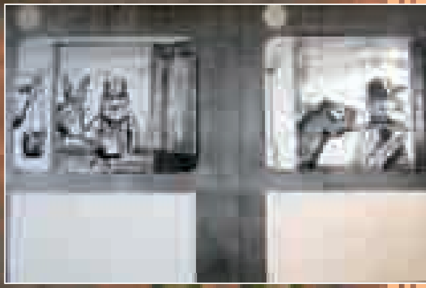




» David's original time-sensitive concept shows how the ants will advance as the days pass in the game.



» Even the manual laid out the story as if it were a film production.



» David proved storyboarding is a valuable tool in creating games.

measured 15 steps from where the ants spawned at the edge of town until they arrived at the town centre. These steps became days in our time matrix. Once the player had used up a day of time, what happened at any one of the 30 locations changed to the next day. If the player wasted time running from one side of town to the other, the ants moved that much faster towards their objective. Of course, my calculations were all very crude, but Randy made it all work in terms of programming."

So now there's a programmer on my heels, too? Makes sense. Cinemaware wasn't like the small time software houses with one cat making games on his lonesome. They were organised,



» A design matrix used to determine the ants movements and actions at various locations on a specific day in the game.

smart. Every one 'a Bob's boys had a role to play, and I knew I was gonna meet the whole gang.

CHAPTER THREE "UPPING THE ANT-E"

"Richard Levine developed interactive tools in consultation with Randy and me. They were critical to us managing the unbelievable amount of potential permeations. The design of *Desert* was divided up into the location/day matrix that designated what the player would encounter at that spot at any point in time. There were a number of options.

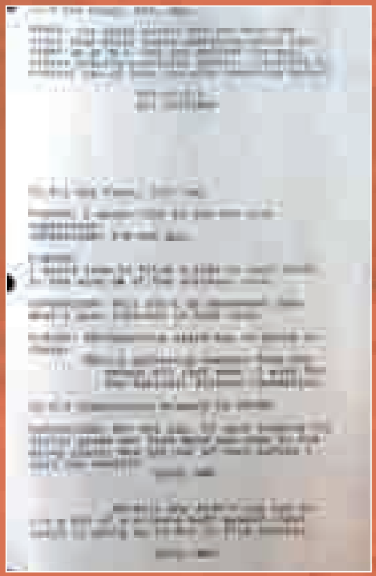
A character could tell you something.
You could find a piece of evidence.
An ant could attack you.
One of six dramatic situation-based mini-game sequences could be launched.
You could be looking at empty desert.

The tool that Richard developed allowed me to input text, character codes, mini-game triggers, background art plates etc. You didn't need to be a programmer to use it. This was revolutionary at the time. Creative types now had some control over the editing process."

Like I said. Smart and organised, kinda like a certain type of insect I can think of.

I was there when these cats used to run the software streets, and I remember the way Jacob's posse looked. Man, they were sharp as a high-class hooker's stiletto, and twice as exclusive. It didn't take much to get him talkin' about Cinemaware's style, and I was all over each word like a cheap suit.

"The last creative step was the visuals.



» Being established screenwriters, David and Ken approached Cinemaware games as if they were writing for… well, the cinema!



» Hello boys! The famous Cinemaware Cleavage that greets the player after he's been mauled by the ants.

"I REMEMBER THE WAY JACOB'S POSSE LOOKED. MAN, THEY WERE SHARP AS A HIGH CLASS HOOKER'S STILETTO, AND TWICE AS EXCLUSIVE"

INTERACTIVE INSECTS

"With the advent of CD-ROM technology, the world of interactive movie-making changed a lot. It made sense for us to think about the third instalment of *Desert* for the TurboGrafx 16. We decided to take a shot at using real actors filmed against blue screen technology and composited with background photographic plates shot in the real desert. Ken and I were in seventh heaven. We were back in the world of actors, voice performances and real music. We had a great time casting the players and I directed for the first time, which was also a gas. Unfortunately, we had to use so much of the TurboGrafx' capabilities for the video sequences, it didn't leave much for gameplay and *Desert III* became more of a demonstration piece. What we learned set the stage for our next evolutionary leap in interactive movie making, however. A whole new generation of interactive movies that our team created like "*Voyeur*" and "*Thunder In Paradise*" were built on what we learned from *Desert III*."
– David Riordan

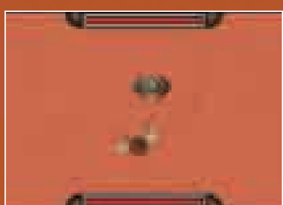


IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

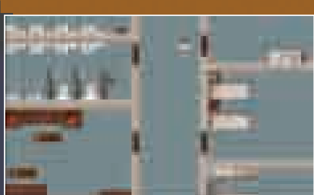


BIG ANTS, MINI GAMES

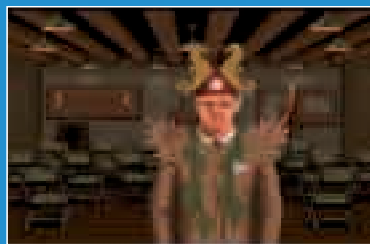
"All the mini-games were also dramatically based on story elements in the town of Lizard Breath. They included a Fifties knife fight with some punks, the classic Fifties game of chicken in hot rods, you could rent a biplane and scout for ants and there was a fire-fighting game when the ants got too frisky and tipped something over. One of people's favourites was the hospital game. The player could choose to stay in bed for the allotted time or try to escape and not pay the time penalty. The hospital game was an afterthought when we realized that players loved to get mauled by the ants. It also gave us a chance to throw in the buxom nurse (the infamous Cinemaware cleavage as it was called) that was so typical of Fiftties horror films!"
– David Riordan







» Making a break from the hospital saves valuable time, but it's one of the hardest aspects of *Desert*.



» This is the Grand Seahorse of the Neptune Society. I think I saw him in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Jeff Hilbers and Jeff Godfrey were the artists that developed the look and feel of *Desert*. They took Ken's characters and gave them a visual life that I still find fresh and fun today. They captured the pulp cartoon feel that made it all work. That was quite a feat. In those days we were lucky if we could get a few frames of animation at any point in time."

I stopped outside the Mayor's office to bum a smoke off the flatfoot. He threw a book of matches in my direction, and hit his beat. The book was empty, so then and there I quit smoking. Guess you can't have everything.

> "IF WE WERE GOING TO TACKLE A FOURTH EDITION OF DESERT, WE WOULD PUT THE AUDIENCE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ACTION IN LIZARD BREATH."
> DAVID RIORDAN

I thought about Riordan's gang, and how much they'd shoehorned into this small town. Seems to me like this guy had everything, and I wanted to know where he got it. Some folk's got the knack for getting what they want. Was he one of 'em?

"Bob [Jacob] wanted Cinemaware games to be more like movies that you would play more than once. This led me to think up lots of variables that would use the same basic environment, but offer subtle differences depending on what the player accomplished. My original plan for *Desert* was massive. What did I know? I just figured it would be cool to have nine different kinds of creatures, lots of attack plans and a massive amount of characters and dramatic situations. I still have the polite memo I received from Randy, which said, "You can have one type of creature, four attack paths and some mini-games." In some ways that saved us. Variations are great, but as it turned out, *Desert* had plenty of gameplay and variety with what we could do on the Amiga at the time. It still required three floppy discs. That was a first."

The streets were empty, but this wasn't the kind 'a town where you felt alone. Not with all the skeletons peekin' outta these closets. I pointed across the street to the only place with light seeping from its windows. A bar.

Well, ain't this a turn up for the goddamn books?

"Oh, you noticed O'Riordan's bar? My original family name from County Cork. Actually, all the locations in Lizard Breath were named after people that worked on the game. We let people choose their own poison. So you have Melville Hospital, Hibler's field, Jacob Mining, Cooks Stud Farm, Platt Lab. etc. The KBUG radio station was a natural as well."

That explains why I'm tailing some hot shot LA suit around the back streets of Hicksville USA, and how come he knows so much about what this place is hiding. The guy's a local, and once you've spent a bit 'a time in Lizard Breath, it's hard to leave. I'm startin' to get that.

"In *Desert*, what was happening out in the hinterland was a total mystery at the beginning of the piece, just as it was in the big bug films. Half the fun was trying to get the town's people to listen to the hero when he warned them something strange was afoot. How many times have we seen a minor character in a big bug film scoff at the idea of danger, only to be eaten before he can finish his sentence? We loved the black humour of those moments. The player in *Desert* needed help to ultimately be successful and the level of help he would receive was completely based on what he discovered."

CHAPTER FOUR: "THE END?"

No one in Lizard Breath's forgotten about the ants, and they sure as hell ain't tryin' to get rid of 'em. The bugs are part of their lives, just like they're part of mine, and every other naive kid who strolled into Lizard Breath with an Amiga under his arm. In a lotta ways, I'd kinda like to see 'em again, one last time – reassure myself that I ain't as crazy as my shrink.

"If we were going to tackle a fourth edition of *Desert*, we would use new game design tools and interactive strategies to put the audience right in the middle of the action in Lizard Breath. They wouldn't know if what they were experiencing was real or not. As I write this, an ant has appeared on my desk. A foretelling of things to come? Only the Ant-mind knows for sure. Over and out."

THE END

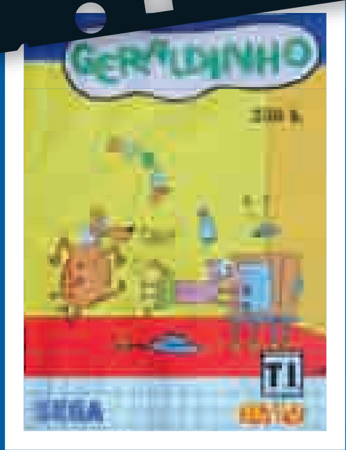


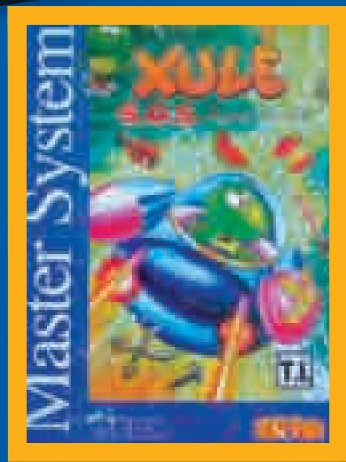
» The ants nest is inside one of the mineshafts, but the miners won't just let you wander in and out without evidence.



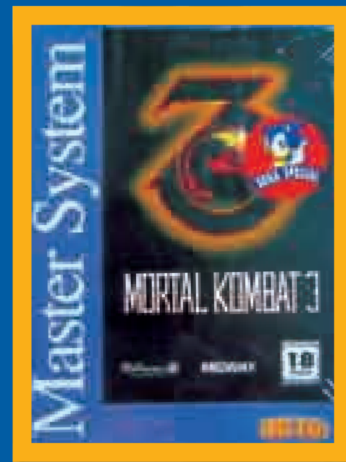
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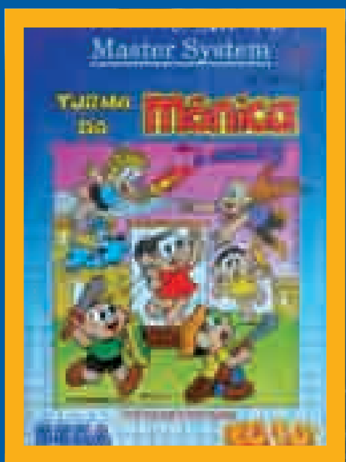
TEC TOY


GERALDINHO
SEGA

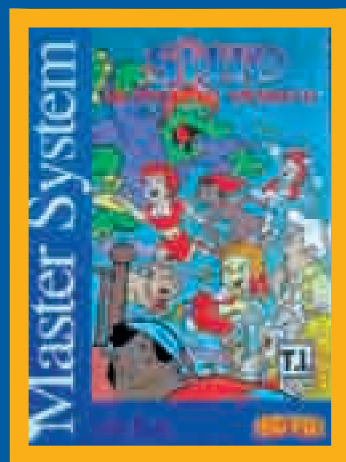

Master System
XULE

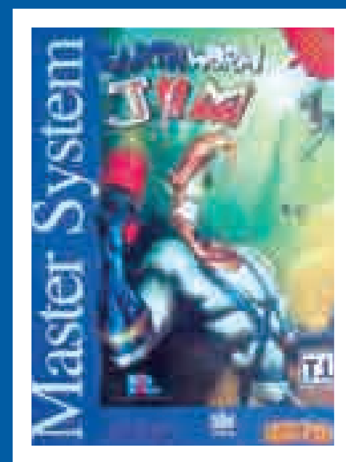

Master System
CAPCOM


Master System
MORTAL KOMBAT 3

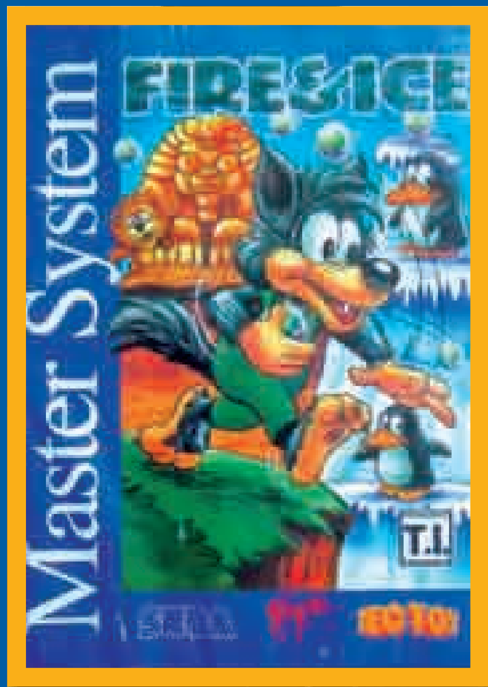

Master System
SEGA


Master System


Master System


Master System


Master System
DYNAMITE
HEADDY
SEGA
TEC TOY


Master System
FIRE & ICE
SEGA
TEC TOY


Master System
XULE
SEGA
TEC TOY

SEGA LIVES ON

John Szczepaniak returns to Brazil and speaks directly with Tec Toy's president, while acquiring world exclusive photography, solving a mystery and taking the time to sample some games.

Most people in the Northern hemispheres of Japan, America and Europe won't know the name Tec Toy, but it's one of the most significant videogame companies in existence. This is not because of its incredibly close partnership with Sega (one of the closest for a non-Japanese company), or because it's the only company still manufacturing Sega hardware. It's all of these things and the fact they struggled against the odds to create a successful and wholly legitimate company in a region rife with piracy.

To get a full and accurate account of events we spoke to the current president of this Brazilian company, Mr Stefano Arnhold, who joined only a few months after it started. He explained the early days, "Tec Toy was founded in September 1987 by Mr Daniel Dazcal and the two Kryss brothers, Leo and Abe, owners of Evadin, a traditional TV manufacturer under the Mitusbishi brand. I only joined the company in December 1987, invited by Mr Dazcal, my former boss at Sharp in Brazil." As shown, the four gentlemen involved in the new start-up all had experience with electronics companies; success in the future seemed within their grasp. Their plan had been to create "intelligent toys" using modern technology, and to cater them specifically to the local market.



» The Zillion laser-tag game was Tec Toy's first Sega licence. (UK version pictured, courtesy of John Phillips.)

Another factor of their success relates to an exceptional regional anomaly. The Brazilian government in 1967 created a Free Economic Zone in the state of Amazonas, called "Zona Franca de Manaus." The region was intended to be exempt from several taxes, including importing and industrial tax, thereby enabling new industries to form and grow, hopefully boosting the economy. It was in this area that Tec Toy built manufacturing plants and later also the Daniel Dazcal Foundation in Manuas city (see boxout). Arnhold elaborated, "Basically all consumer electronics are assembled in the Industrial Pole of the Free Zone of Manaus, due to tax incentives and Tec Toy chose to have its plant there for the same reason."

They expanded quickly, opening several offices and warehouses throughout Brazil. Their steps towards partnering with Sega were tentative at first, involving not games but a laser-tag device. "In 1987 we contacted Sega and our first licensed product was a toy called Zillion, a laser tag game introduced in April 1988. The product was fully manufactured in Brazil." It resembled the Master System lightgun and was originally marketed in Japan, based on the phaser featured in the Japanese anime of the same name, (which actually went on to become two licensed games for the Master System, resulting in several separate products all with the same name, Zillion).

After this came the jump to videogames. They had met all the prerequisites needed to represent Sega in South America but, as Arnhold explains, they'd already proven themselves capable in Sega's eyes. "I think that after our success with Zillion, they saw that we were the best option for Brazil." Indeed they were, going on to become the most successful legally endorsed games company in the country. He continues, "After the successful experience with Zillion we introduced the Master System in September 1989. Due to an aggressive marketing strategy Master System took the lead in the 8-bit market in Brazil, beating Nintendo, and in 1990 we introduced Mega Drive, which also led the 16-bit market."



» There was no Sega system left untouched in Brazil. Here we see *Ecco Jr* for the educational Pico system.

They also created interesting variations of hardware, like the Master System Super Compact. This curious little device was a wireless handheld system, except instead of a dedicated screen it directly transmits visual information to the nearest TV via a small aerial. It was later re-released in neon pink as the "Master System Girl", with a shift in the intended target audience. It was through Tec Toy that Sega's 8-bit debut received its greatest success (remembering it had been beaten by the NES elsewhere), and it continued being marketed as the rest of the technophile world moved on. Nintendo only officially entered the region quite late and was unable to compete against the bootleg NES systems already available or the might of Tec Toy, who had built up a strong following and a reputation for quality. This gives Tec Toy the rare honour of being the only hardware company to beat Nintendo in the 8-bit console market. After partnering with



» While most companies are only just waking up to pink systems, Tec Toy had been doing it years ago.

IN THE KNOW

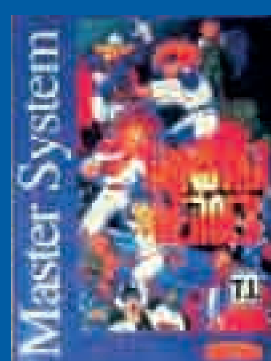
Founded in 1987 Tec Toy went on to successfully partner Sega and marketed all of Sega's systems in Brazil, with much success. They also modified the hardware to suit the native market, localised several titles using popular cartoon characters and ported many games to the Master System, which were exclusively sold in Brazil. An amazing success story, Tec Toy continues to thrive and still markets Sega products.



» Daniel Efraim Dazcal, the founder of Tec Toy. Admired by all who knew him, he's described as ethical and someone who cared about his employees.

COLLECTORS ITEMS

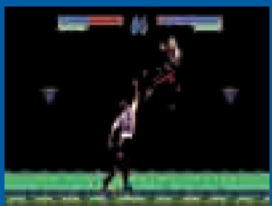
Tec Toy released many oddities which are now highly sought after by the hardcore underground collective, specifically their many Master System variations and accompanying exclusive games. The most controversial though is the alleged SMS version of *Gunstar Heroes* which turned up on eBay several years ago (see image). But the auction was stopped early and some gormless people started speculating hysterically. So we asked the president of Tec Toy, was such a game ever released? His exact and unedited words were, "*Gunstar Heroes* was only launched for 16-bit." So there you have it loyal readers, concrete proof that the eBay auction started all those years ago, and subsequently reported in various magazines, was actually a hoax. Another mystery solved by everyone's favourite retro magazine. We are good to you.



TEC TOY



» Tec Toy also dabbled with Sega's slightly less successful systems, the Sega CD and 32X.



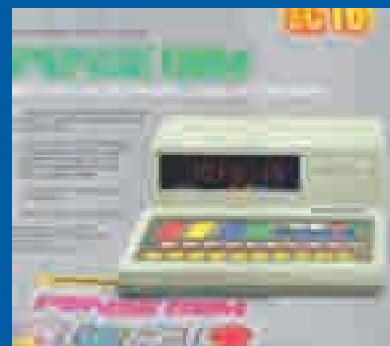
AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

Mortal Kombat 3 (SMS)

Tec Toy were not infallible and they did publish some poor games. In our mind the worst was Master System *Mortal Kombat 3* by Software Creations. Not a great game to begin with, porting it to such an underpowered system sucked whatever life was originally in it. A valiant objective, but still terrible.

Sega things got very interesting. Tec Toy started building relationships with other foreign companies such as Capcom, Tyco, Electronic Arts, Acclaim, Midway, Williams and others. This gave access to many games released abroad which Tec Toy then translated into Portuguese (including several large RPGs like *Phantasy Star*), while adapting some using local cartoon characters. *Ghost House* became *Chapolim Vs Drácula: Um Duelo Assutador*, featuring characters from a Mexican TV show which was hugely successful in Brazil. *Asterix* became *Adventuras Da TV Colosso* and *Teddy Boy* became *Geraldinho*. Interestingly, *Psycho Fox, Kung Fu Kid,* and *Astro Warrior* were all localised into a strangely-connected trilogy of *Sapo Xule* games, starring an environmentally conscious frog. Meanwhile, *Wonderboy* games had the main character replaced by a girl, Monica, and her friends from a famous Brazilian comic.

The most exciting element about Tec Toy is not its localisations, but the games which were released only in South America. Several were ports of Game Gear games (a system few could afford, while the architecture was nearly identical to the SMS), such as *Virtua Fighter Animation* and *Dynamite Headdy*. They also snapped up the publishing rights to games left in limbo, such as *Fire And Ice* (SMS) and *Nightmare Circus* (MD). Plus they developed their own games (mostly licences) such as *Street Fighter 2, Ferias Frustadas Do Pica Pau* (*Woody Woodpecker Vacations*), *Sitio Do Pica Pau Amarelo* which was based on a children's book and a 20-in-1 SMS multi-cart bundled with consoles.



» In their first year, along with the Zillion laser-tag gun, Tec Toy released the Pense Bem, a kind of educational computer toy.

Arnhold then picked up the story of how things progressed over the years, eventually moving beyond the Brazilian market and into neighbouring countries: "In 1988, after our first full year in the market, Tec Toy launched 45 products and became the number two toy manufacturer in Brazil. In 1991 the Game Gear was introduced and turnover reached US$ 100 Million, and by 1992 we were already the largest toy manufacturer in the country. Our promotional investment reached US$ 10 Million and we started operations in Argentina and Uruguay, as Sega gave us the task to co-ordinate all MERCOSUL markets."

But then tragedy struck as the founder, Mr Daniel Efraim Dazcal, sadly passed away in May 1992 at the age of 42, having created and built up one of South America's most successful companies. Of course this didn't hold the company back, and the fiery passion of Tec Toy prevailed.

Stefano Arnhold finished by speaking about their peak, "In 1993 the company went public with shares traded in the São Paulo Stock Exchange and we also introduced PC Games. In 1994 our Sega Club reached 200 thousand active members (the Club now has more than one million members) and in 1995 we introduced the Sega Saturn. In 1996 we reached the mark of 2MM consoles sold and our hotline was receiving 50 thousand calls a month. Over the next year we entered the Internet market as a full Internet and content provider

GAMES REVIEWS



YUYU HAKUSHO – SUNSET FIGHTERS

1999 TREASURE

» Treasure's classic beat-'em-up, allowing for up to four simultaneous players, only saw release in Japan and (eventually) Brazil, thanks to Tec Toy. It's one of the best console fighters of the 16-bit era, eclipsing even the ports of *Street Fighter*. You can fight opponents to your left and right, while moving between horizontal planes. Full of Treasure's trademark style, Brazil was lucky to have seen its release. **95%**



STREET FIGHTER 2

1997 TEC TOY

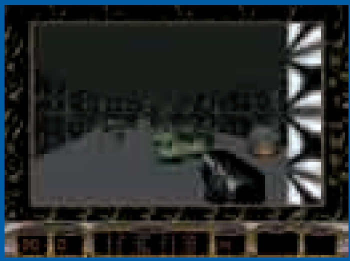
» Attempting to cram *Street Fighter 2* into a Master System cartridge is rather daring. But in 1997 Tec Toy officially licensed and developed a version for Sega's 8-bit wonder; their attempt was the only official 8-bit console version. Unfortunately it doesn't quite work, with dodgy collision detection and about three animation frames for each of the eight fighters (several are missing). But we love it anyway, for its sheer tenacity and fun two-player mode. **65%**



MASTER SYSTEM 3 COLLECTION – 120 SUPER JOGOS

2006 TEC TOY

» Tec Toy continues to release updates of their multi-game systems, with the latest Master System 3 having 120 games. The majority of titles are classics such as *The New Zealand Story*. Even with XE.com saying the Brazilian price is around £60, the fact it also has a cartridge slot makes this excellent value for money. If only they worked on British TVs. **N/A**



DUKE NUKEM 3D

1998 3D REALMS

» Ported in Brazil by Tec Toy thanks to a sub-licensee, this was another daring attempt to push the ageing Mega Drive further than before. It isn't so much a port as a new game using the same themes – the levels are wholly different. Commendably the scrolling is very smooth (sometimes too smooth), but what lets it down is the MD's limited colour palette. The visuals are painfully grainy, making things difficult to see and the game overly challenging. **68%**



20-EM-1

1995 TEC TOY

» A selection of very simple timed (around 1 minute each) SMS mini-games, with bright and colourful graphics, where the only objective is to work out what to do and get as high a score as possible. In all likelihood it's probably aimed at children, but for some reason, despite the rudimentary visuals and sound, there's a compelling urge to keep improving your score. This image is from a game where you make a mouse jump for cheese. **80%**



MEGA DRIVE 3 – 71 SUPER JOGOS

2006 TEC TOY

» Another unique hardware release from Tec Toy. Containing a great collection of much loved titles, and at roughly £70 with the ability to still play new cartridges, it's a wonderful item! Curiously, while having the third instalments of *Sonic* and *Shinobi*, it's missing earlier versions. Despite lacking bundled RPGs and maybe a few common favourites, you honestly can't complain with 71 games! **N/A**



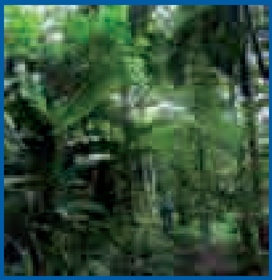
» Stefano Arnhold (Tec Toy President), Mr David Rosen (founder of Sega) and Mr Sakurai (Executive Director of Sega), make history by joining forces.



» Stefano Arnhold with Mr. Nakayama (Sega President), when Tec Toy gave him an amethyst to celebrate the ten year partnership (1987-1997).

PERMACULTURE

To honour Tec Toy's founder, who sadly passed away, the permaculture-based "Daniel Dazcal Foundation" was formed. The term "permaculture" was created by two Australians in the Seventies, meaning a system of sustainable habitats and food production designed around nature. As the website explains, "The target of the Foundation that carries his name, is to spread Permaculture techniques in order to teach poor populations to produce their own food to live through ecologically correct and economically viable methods. The broadcasting of those techniques will certainly have a huge impact on the future of those populations, in the same way as Mr Dazcal's short life had an impact on all of us." The fact that a videogame company like Tec Toy would be involved in such work, shows how honourable those in charge are. See http://www.fdd.org.br/ for more information.



under license from Compuserve. In 1999 Dreamcast was introduced."

As for Tec Toy's proudest achievements over the years? This question raised some surprises. Along with the expected comments on besting Nintendo and gaining market supremacy, Stefano revealed some information regarding the Internet and online banking. It turns out that the Japan-exclusive services mentioned in Retro Gamer 27's Mega Drive article, also made their way to South America! As he explains, "We'd beaten Nintendo in the 8-bit market – a statement that very few people can make. We'd introduced in 1995 a Mega Drive accessory that brought people the Internet (mainly e-mail) and in 1996 the same technology permitted head-to-head online gaming (with chat) and a Home Banking Product (both were for Mega Drive). Then in 1998 we reached 1000 software (products) published! Today we are still the number one Brazilian Video Game Manufacturer carrying Sega products."

We then asked Arnhold why he feels they have been so successful. He smiles, reflecting on the past, before explaining that a lot was due to genuinely caring about customers. "Maybe the reason for our success was based on low cost, high quality, locally manufactured products, plus aggressive marketing and a good knowledge of our end consumer. We did not only sell them a product, we invited them to join Sega Club where they enjoyed a sense of participating in a community, received special promotions (discounts for everything from movie tickets to Formula 1 Grand Prix seats)."

Beyond this they also took part in several industry firsts, including ventures that had otherwise been limited to Japan, and developed several world exclusives. "We had an excellent hotline for Tips and Hints, and even started to take [consoles] online before the Internet really went commercial. We developed games with local characters, localized RPG games and always maintained the life of a console, even after Sega dropped them. Master System received most Game Gear exclusives, as well as new developments such as *Street Fighter*."

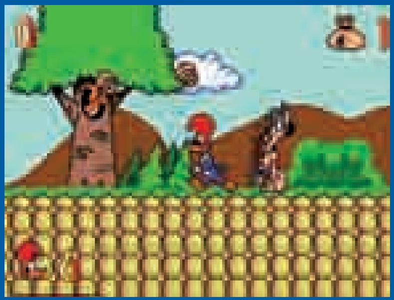
We then challenged him, asking if Tec Toy had ever considered acquiring a licence from, for example, Nintendo. But he was resolute in his answer, "No, we were always faithful to Sega." This is true since while Sega left the hardware market years ago, it's still viable in Brazil and Tec Toy continues to manufacture Sega systems. Best of all, they contain plenty of high-quality built-in games. As seen online they still market the "Master System 3", with 120 games installed, including four *Alex Kidd* games, *Baku Baku Animal*, three *Fantasy Zone* games, *Penguin Land*, *Rainbow Islands* and too many other classics to list. Complementing this is its "Mega Drive 3" with 71 installed games, again featuring a healthy selection of favourites (making the UK's Radica pads look rather pathetic). Sadly Tec Toy has ceased manufacturing new cartridges for systems and development of post-Mega Drive machines has also stopped.

Much of Tec Toy's success has come from being partnered with Sega when they were hardware manufacturers and so we asked, what is the future of Tec Toy now that Sega is software only and no other company's hardware (Nintendo, Microsoft, Sony) has such an established stronghold? Mr Arnhold was defiant and answered with a sense of pride, confident they would continue to succeed and hinting at great things to come. "Our main business today is the manufacturing of DVD products (Hardware under Tec Toy brand and Karaoke software using VCD technology). The future will come with Sega again through mobile games."

"IN 1996 WE REACHED THE MARK OF 2MM CONSOLES; OUR HOTLINE WAS RECEIVING 50 THOUSAND CALLS A MONTH" STEFAN ARNHOLD

Tec Toy and the market they helped to create are a fascinating alternative to what we have in Japan and the West. While acquiring their wares is not an easy task and the hardware won't work on non-Brazilian TVs, head over to www.tectoy.com.br to see what's available to our Portuguese speaking cousins.

Special thanks to the president of Tec Toy, Stefano Arnhold, for answering questions and kindly donating photos. Thanks also to www.consolemad.co.uk for providing the Zillion laser-tag photo, and Luiz Bonaccorsi of www.gamesbrazil.com for aiding with research and imagery.



» *Woody Woodpecker Vacations* for the Mega Drive.



» *Nightmare Circus* on the Mega Drive wasn't developed by Tec Toy, but they were the only ones to publish it.

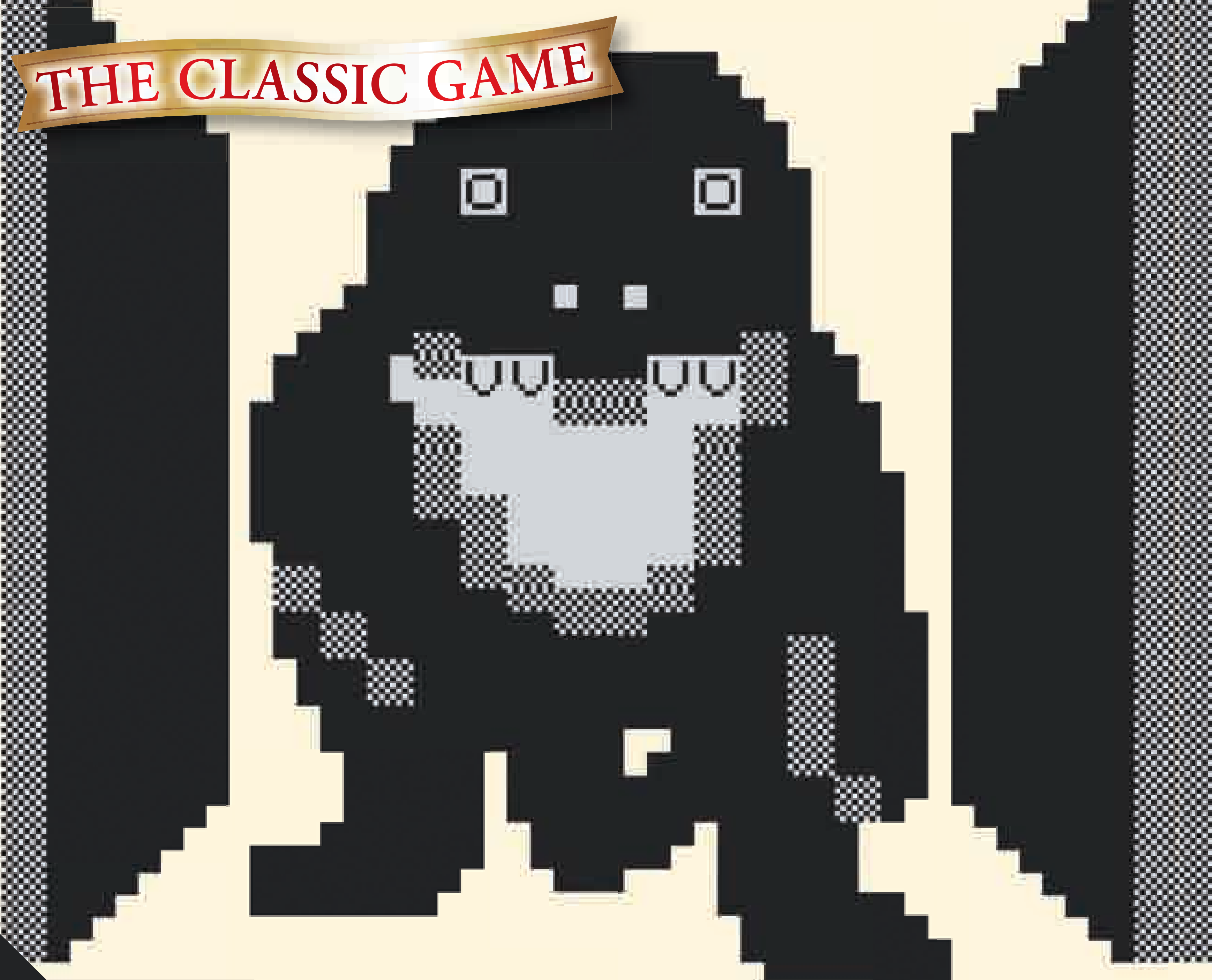


FINEST HOUR

Succeeding against the odds

There is no single thing which can be called Tec Toy's finest hour, rather it is the fact they succeeded so magnificently when others were failing. They legitimised South American gaming, set precedents, created a lasting legacy and brought officially licensed products to the masses. A company for Brazil to be proud of.

THE CLASSIC GAME



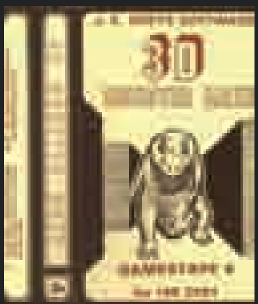
3D MONSTER MAZE

Trapped, unarmed, entirely deaf, and being tracked by one of pre-history's most terrifying reptiles. This is what was experienced by lucky ZX81 owners in 1982. John Szczepaniak re-enters the 3D Monster Maze and grapples with one of England's most famous Dynamosaurus Imperiosus.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** J. K. GREYE SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** MALCOLM EVANS
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SURVIVAL HORROR
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** 50P



Clive Sinclair's ZX81 is almost synonymous with Malcolm Evans' 3D *Monster Maze* (*MM*). Whenever the humble 16k micro is spoken of, *MM* is fondly described and listed as one of, if not the best game released for it. Whenever anyone decides to emulate the silent duotone beast that is the ZX81, *MM* is inevitably the first game tested (it's often actually bundled with said emulators), and once other high quality titles have been played *MM* is normally what people return to. It is also, nearly 25 years later, one of the few titles available for the system which still manages to impress.

The premise is simple: you are placed in a massive maze viewed from a first-person perspective. Everything is silent, but you know that somewhere within the maze there is a Tyrannosaurus Rex desperate to hunt you down and render marrow from bone. As the intro explicitly states, "The management advise that this is not a game for those of a nervous disposition." There is also an exit and using only three buttons (5 turns left, 7 is forward, 8 turns right) you must navigate the maze, avoid the titular monster, and somehow make it out of there alive. After which you get to do it all again, in an entirely new (and randomly generated) maze. Points are gained only for each step taken while the T-Rex is actively hunting you, meaning to score highly you need to get as close to the danger as possible. It's a subtle design element which forces not only greater exploration but also risk-taking, like a proverbial moth repeatedly plunging ever closer to the naked candle flame.

All this may seem incredibly simple and uninteresting today, but this is a blasé attitude to take. Back in the early

THEY SAID:

““IF I HAD TO CHOOSE JUST ONE PROGRAMME TO IMPRESS AN AUDIENCE WITH THE CAPABILITIES OF THE ZX81, THEN 3D MONSTER MAZE WOULD BE THE ONE WITHOUT A DOUBT”

ZX COMPUTING DECEMBER 1983



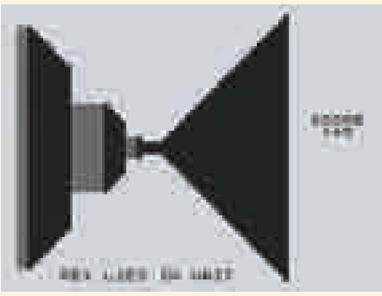
Eighties, as the nation's children watched *DangerMouse* and ate sugar-saturated breakfast cereal, *3D Monster Maze* was all about terrifying atmosphere and desperation. A complete lack of audio added to this, since without being able to actually hear approaching footsteps the player had to read status updates which were constantly displayed on the screen. It was a corrosive silence which made the inevitable encounter with a gaping maw of dagger-sharp teeth all the more terrifying when it finally happened. Even the developer, Malcolm Evans, has attested to being frightened by his own creation. Trying to find the exit becomes a frantic race around blind corners, and the tension constantly increases because you fully understand that with each step which doesn't bring about your exodus, your foe is likely to get one step closer. You can actually run faster than Mr Rex, which in theory makes things easy (certainly it never feels unfair), but lack of concentration and panic normally leads to an impromptu and sudden face-to-face meeting with the dreaded reptilian foe.

The graphics (built from a series of 8 by 8 pixel characters resembling ASCII) might be incredibly blocky to those used to today's high-definition era, but there is a distinct swagger in the dinosaur's movements as his black arms hypnotically sway from side to side. Look about these two pages and you can feel the charm oozing from the minimalist designs; squint and you can even almost see a bottle of Brown Sauce in his breast pocket, ready for the ensuing meal. Almost.

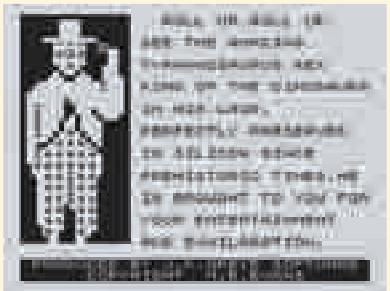
To fully understand and appreciate *MM*, both what it is and what it achieved, you need to have sampled other games available for the ZX81. After sitting down and loading from audio cassette tape ten (randomly selected) games, and then finally loading *MM*, an epiphany should occur which enlightens you as to how revolutionary it was for that era. Only in the arcades could one have been able to experience anything more advanced; for home use, those low-resolution mazes-of-impending-death were the vanguard of gaming exhilaration.

It was also one of the very earliest first-person shooters ever devised for home usage (this is debated, with *Dungeons Of Daggorath* also vying for position). Quite a prestigious accolade to hold, though it comes with a few caveats. There are no actual guns in *MM*, or any weapons for that matter, so the "shooter" statement is a bit of a misnomer. Some prefer to call it a first-person adventure, but the fact remains that it was the original home-based corridor crawler years before *Wolfenstein 3D*. John Carmack would only have been around 12 years old at the time of its release, though in all likelihood he never saw and therefore was never influenced by *MM*.

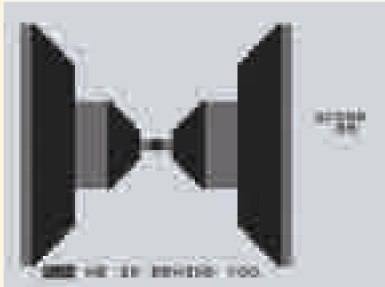
Even today it is still enjoyable, far more so than one would think it should be! Games which allow scoring will always draw people and, being so accessible and intuitive to control, its basic (almost puzzle like) mechanics allow for quick bouts of tactile play. In a way it's almost comparable to *Tetris* since, apart from working so incredibly well without colour, it is *Monster Maze*'s highly refined pickup-and-play simplicity which has allowed it to endure better than most other games of the era. There are no problems with collision detection being imprecise or the controls requiring adaptation; there are no rough edges to distract you. Once it's loaded you're away and even after dying, a quick tap of the C button puts you right back in the action. Granted it won't keep you away from *Prey* for very long, but load it up on your old ZX81 (or emulate it), and you'll instantly see why it's a Classic Game.



» A brief moment of respite. Enjoy it, because such moments are scarce in that hellish maze.



» The story involves a circus and dinosaur preserved in silicon. Nothing unusual about an FPS with a throwaway plot, then.



» It's no good running now, you're already dead.



» It's time to accept your particularly horrific fate.

SQUINT AND YOU CAN ALMOST SEE A BOTTLE OF BROWN SAUCE IN HIS BREAST POCKET, READY FOR THE ENSUING MEAL… ALMOST

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

KNOT IN 3D
ZX SPECTRUM
(1983)

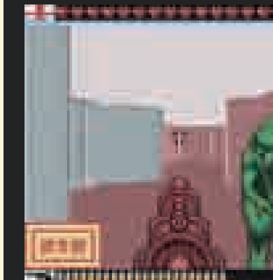
TRASHMAN
ZX SPECTRUM
(1984)

JONAH BARRINGTON'S SQUASH
ZX SPECTRUM
(1985)



PSEUDO-SEQUEL?

A highly ambitious Game Boy Color title inspired by *3D Monster Maze* was nearly released. Called *Tyrannosaurus Tex* and developed by Slitherine Software in the UK, it was completed in 2000 but ended up unreleased due to Eidos getting cold feet. It was previewed by several publications, many of which interviewed the developers, and the game was reported to be "smooth like *Wolfenstein 3D*". It would have been a landmark release – there had been almost no other FPS titles developed for pre-GBA Game Boy hardware. In interviews Slitherine made mention of *3D Monster Maze* having an influence, though with *Tyrannosaurus Tex* featuring weapons it's debatable how strong the connection would have been (though check out this screenshot). Assuming Slitherine are willing to talk and provide playable code, Retro Gamer will happily cover it in a future issue.





SNATCHER

A CYBERPUNK ADVENTURE



» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **GENRE:** GRAPHIC ADVENTURE
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA CD
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40+

HISTORY

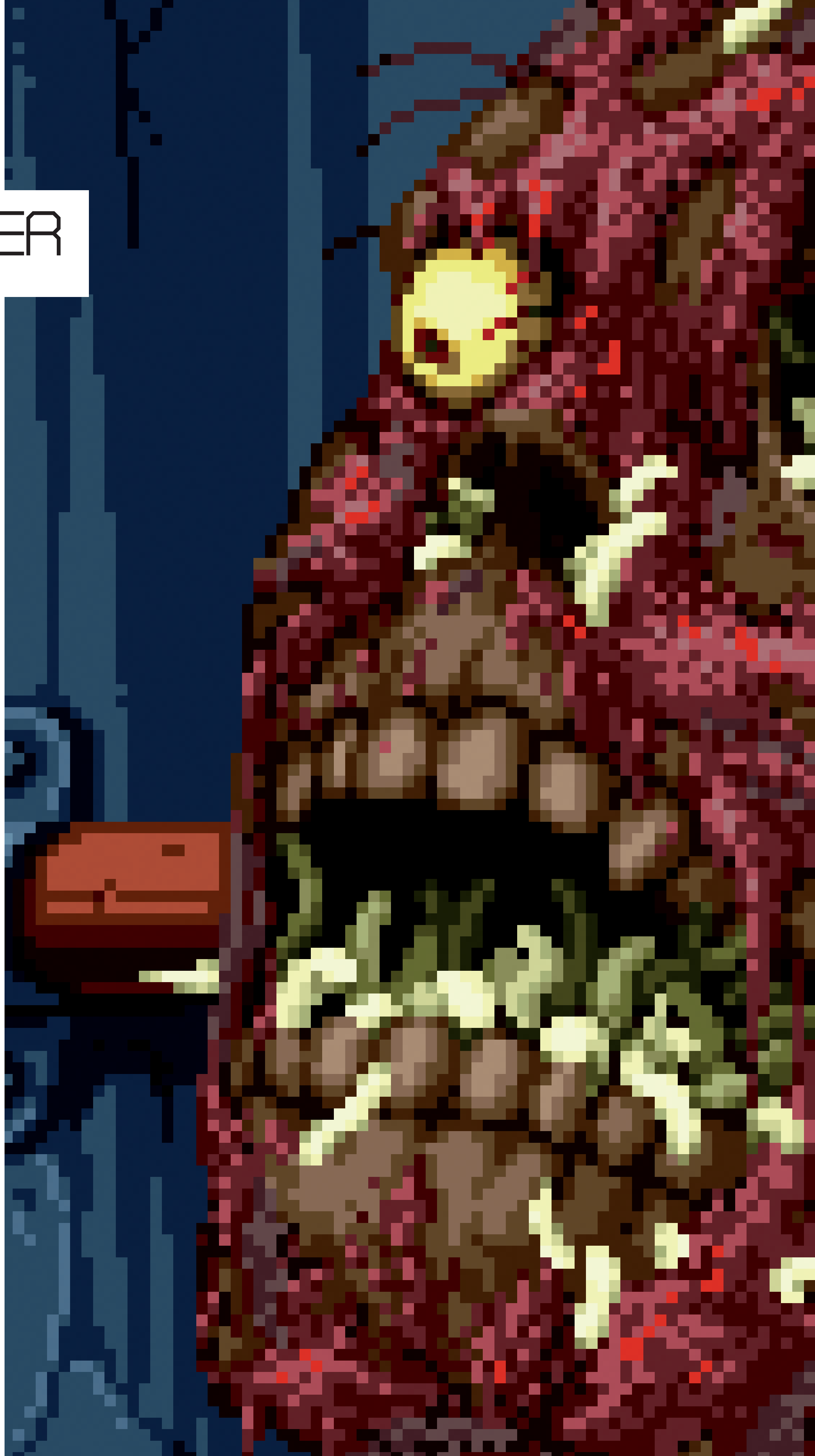


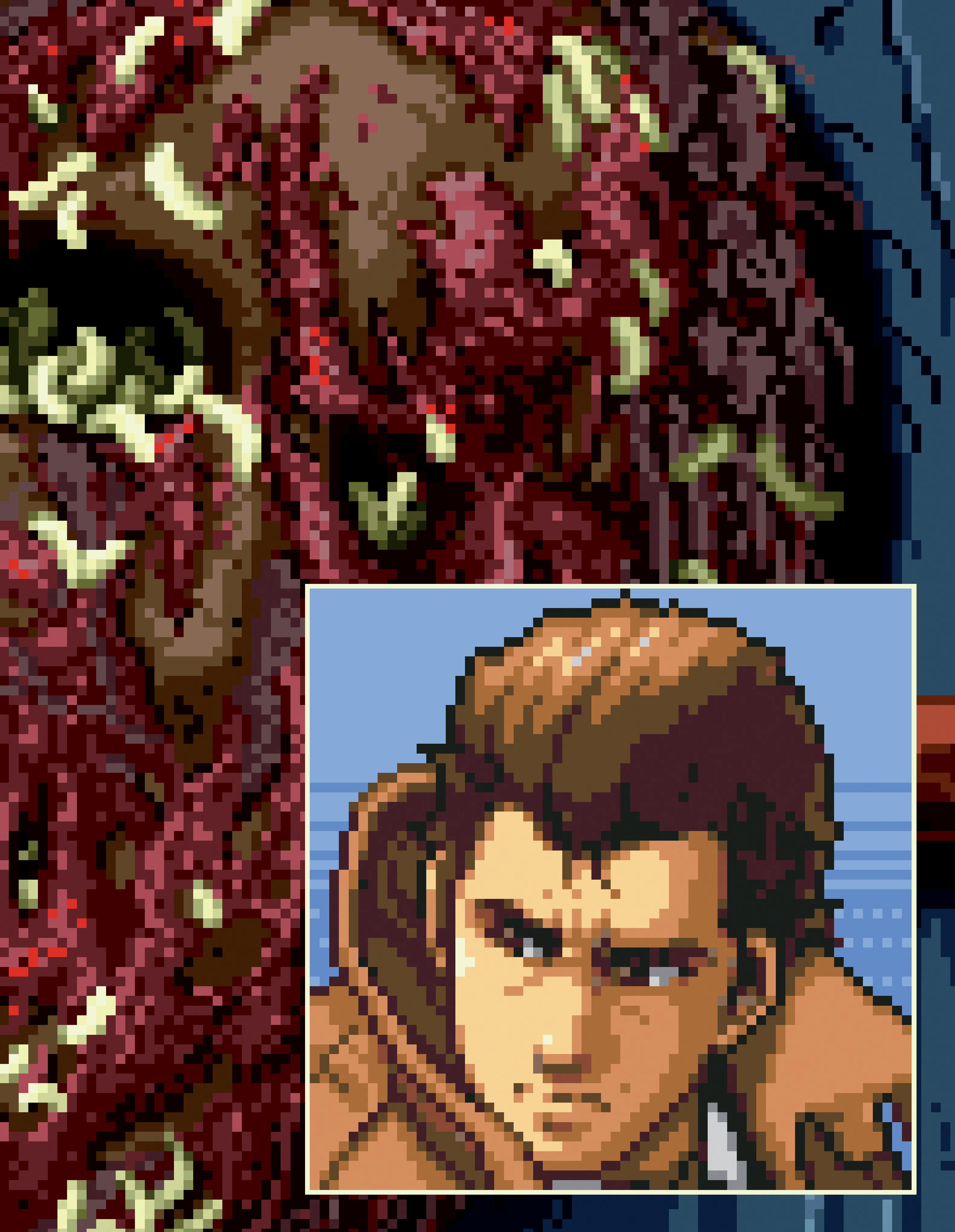
Hideo Kojima's *Snatcher*, hailed by many as one of the greatest graphic adventures ever, is nearly two decades old (the original PC-88 and MSX versions came out in 1988). Unquestionably retro yet still intensely enjoyable, it's a timeless classic. This is because the actual gameplay (selecting menu options and occasional lightgun sections) is ancillary to what is a thrilling (*Bladerunner* inspired) sci-fi plot.

Retro Gamer has long debated running either a Classic Game or Why You Must Play feature, but, because most satisfaction is derived from the storyline, it would be nearly impossible to explain specifically why it's so excellent without spoiling things. The very first playthrough of *Snatcher* is the most special and, were selective memory erasure possible, it would be repeatedly forgotten and played over again. At least by us. So we've no intention of ruining things for the uninitiated.

Snatcher was released across several formats in Japan; only the Mega CD version was localised into English (by Jeremy Blaustein) and released in both America and the UK. The story (explained via a chilling spoken intro, and featuring some deeply ominous music) begins in 2046, 50 years after a global biohazard which originated in Russia (the "Catastrophe") wipes out half the world's population. But there's a new threat to contend with – Snatchers! These are skeletal cyborgs with artificial skin (think Terminator) who are snatching and replacing important people.

You take control of amnesiac Gillian Seed who, along with his wife, was found cryogenically frozen in a Siberian laboratory. To bring back his memory Gillian moves to Neo Kobe in Japan (having undergone military training) and fights the Snatchers, since it's the only name he recognises. So he becomes a JUNKER (Japanese Undercover Neuro Kinetic Elimination Ranger, or Judgement Uninfected Naked Kind & Execute Ranger, depending on which translation you prefer). The unfolding investigation is gripping, and hopefully this screenshot will encourage you to play it.







THE DEFINITIVE LODE RUNNER

STUART CAMPBELL DRIVES PAST THE STOP-'N'-SHOP WITH THE RADIO ON, BEFORE REALISING HE'S GOT A BIT CONFUSED AND IS ACTUALLY SUPPOSED TO BE WRITING THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF LODE RUNNER. HE'S BEEN WORKING TOO HARD AGAIN, THE IDIOT.

When two or three old videogamers are gathered together, sooner or later the conversation will turn to the eternal questions. "Is Sue, the fourth ghost in *Ms Pac-Man*, actually just Clyde from the original *Pac-Man* in drag?", one will ask. "Is it you or the aliens who are the *Galaxians*?", another will ponder. And sooner or later, they'll probably get round to "So, which game has appeared on the most formats ever?" And one of them – almost certainly the cleverest and best-looking one – will probably reply "You know, I wouldn't be at all surprised if it was *Lode Runner*".

Because there can be very few games that have appeared on anywhere near as many platforms as Doug E Smith's seminal gold-collection platformer. The like of the aforementioned titles, well-kept as they are reclusive, are retiring wallflowers in comparison. Where's the Sega SG-1000 version of *Pac-Man*, eh? Or the PC Engine port, or the Atari ST release? Nowhere, is where. But all those formats, and almost any other you can think of, has seen an official *Lode Runner* game. (For the sake of sanity, let's not even think about the hundreds of home-brew tributes, add-ons, rip-offs and pseudo-sequels.) And still they come, more than 20 years after the original, with recent new releases on both the GameCube and GBA.

But why has this primitive-looking game endured when so many have fallen by the wayside? Why, despite being originally created by an American, are most *Lode Runner* games released only in Japan? Why are so many of the series' games so mind-bogglingly hard? These are just a few of the questions we won't be answering in this feature. The Definitive… is only here to bring you the facts, man – psychological speculation and racio-ethnic character-trait analysis aren't covered by our insurance. But if you want to find a way through the tangled maze that is the history of *Lode Runner*, and separate the gaming gold from the spray-painted doggy doo, then this article's your man. Let's go, Mr Driver! (That's *Chase HQ* – Ed)



1982

MINER (APPLE 2)

So let's start with a game that isn't called *Lode Runner*. ('Oh no' – readers everywhere.) The *LR* story truly begins with programmer Doug E Smith wasting the resources of his university mainframe computer in the early Eighties to create a game called *Kong*, an ASCII-graphics platformer confusingly inspired by the classic coin-op *Space Panic*. It proved so popular with the students that Smith went on to write an updated version for the Apple 2 home micro, and called it *Miner*. Never actually commercially published, and with tiny green blobs in place of the series' trademark gold bars, it's nevertheless instantly recognisable as *Lode Runner*, and all of the game's core components are in place.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Apple emulator Applewin.



» *Miner*'s enemies, in a little nod to *Space Panic*, are clearly crude versions of that game's antenna-bearing red aliens.

1983

LODE RUNNER (APPLE 2/C64/NES/SPECTRUM/MSX/PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING ELSE)

The first commercial *Lode Runner* was published by Broderbund a few months after the appearance of *Miner*, and was an immediate success. With a breathtaking-for-the-time 150 levels of platforms and ladders, it represented a towering challenge to players weaned on the more manageable scale of games like the 10-screen *Miner 2049er*. Indeed, with limited lives, no continues and no saves, it was almost completely unconquerable to the vast majority of its audience, so when the Spectrum port came out in 1984, it gave users access to the editing system which, in addition to letting you create and save your own completely original levels, also let you move the existing ones around at will, so you could at least see them all. The feature was so popular that most subsequent *Lode Runner*s have also included level editors. (Indeed, many of the original 150 levels were designed by Smith's friends and neighbours using the first version of the editor – only about 30 of the stages were created by the author himself.)

While most of the home computer versions were straight ports from the Apple game, French company Loriciels also created an excellent, very distinctive version for the Amstrad CPC (later ported to the Atari ST), with a credits screen in which everyone working on the game had the first name "Doug". The NES version, meanwhile, coded by Hudson Soft, introduced a zoomed-in scrolling view and changed the stick-man cast into characters from its *Bomberman* series, the first in what would turn out to be a long line of thematic shifts.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The ST and NES versions are probably the best, and run in the Steem and VirtuaNES emulators respectively.

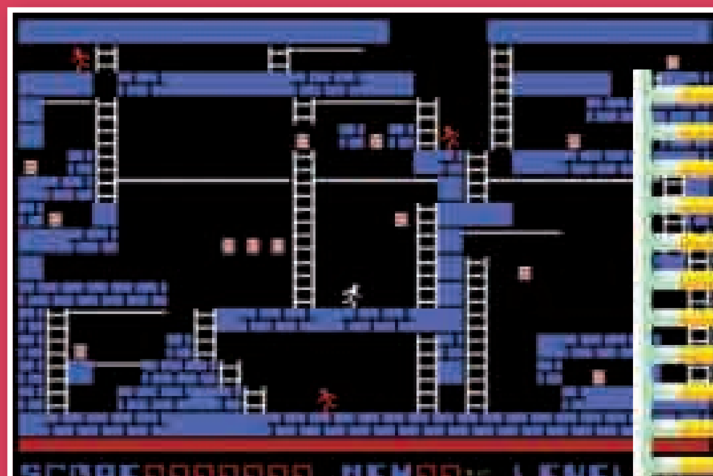
1983

LODE RUNNER II (MSX)

Oddly, after the first game being released on so many formats, the MSX was the only one to get this standalone sequel. It's really just the original with an all-new set of levels*, but it was sold as a separate cart. It's sluggish and not particularly interesting, and unless you're an obsessive *LR* completist it's probably not worth going to a lot of trouble for.

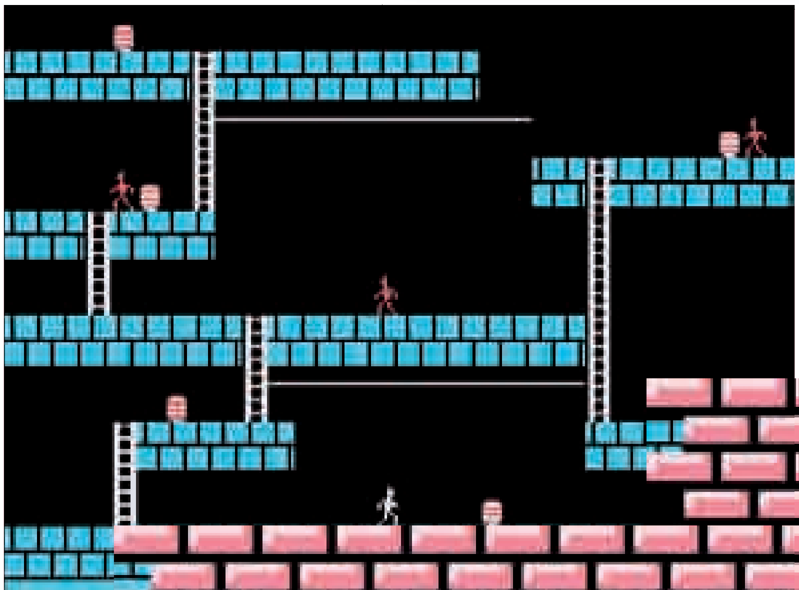
* As far as I can tell, anyway. And this goes for all the other games in this piece too – there are literally thousands of different levels in the dozens of *Lode Runner* games, and if you think I'm sitting here taking pictures of them all and cross-referencing them on some sort of giant chart so that I can see if some of the stages from *Hyper Lode Runner* on the Game Boy are in fact taken from the Japanese Famicom disk version of *Super Lode Runner 2* or some other obscure version, you must imagine that I actually get paid in solid gold bars for these features.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The BlueMSX emulator.



» Interestingly, if you collect the gold bars in a certain order, this level's gravity is suddenly reversed. (Lie.)

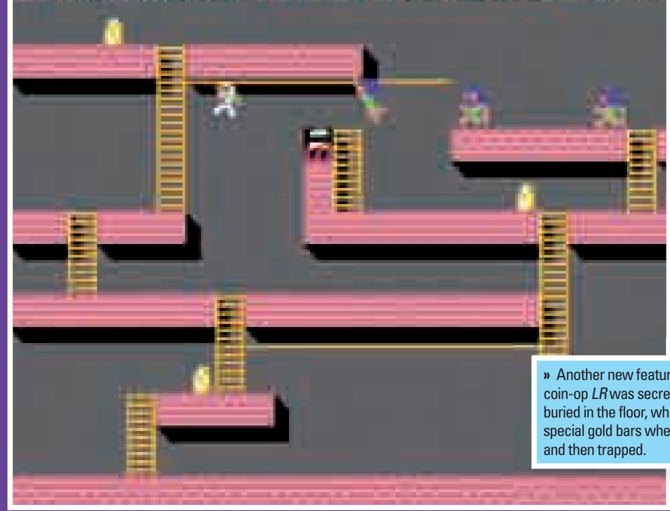
» The SG1000 version subtly changed the design of many levels to fit them into the machine's display. See if you can spot the differences in Level 1 compared to other shots of it in this feature.



1984

LODE RUNNER (ARCADE). LODE RUNNER - THE BUNGELING STRIKES BACK (ARCADE)

While home conversions of arcade games were a mainstay of the videogaming industry for much of its first decade, home titles making the transition to coin-op was a much rarer phenomenon. *Lode Runner* was almost certainly the first, and *R-Type* publisher Irem did a beautiful job of it, giving it bright cartoon graphics, music and a bunch of new features, like points bonuses for completing screens without digging any holes or killing any enemies. It's hard to imagine arcadegoers standing at the cabinet for the hours and hours it would have taken to knock off all the coin-op's 99 levels, but it evidently did well enough to generate a data-set sequel the same year, and this slick and speedy port is the definitive version of original *Lode Runner*.



» Another new feature of the coin-op *LR* was secret enemies buried in the floor, who give up special gold bars when revealed and then trapped.

1984

CHAMPIONSHIP LODE RUNNER (NES/SEGA SG1000/MSX/APPLE 2/C64)

Despite the gruelling difficulty, there were some devoted gamers who'd managed to battle their way through all 150 levels of the first game, and wanted more. Their punishment for such an Oliver Twist-ish outburst was *Championship Lode Runner*, a crushingly difficult set of new levels that started where the brutal final stages of the original left off, belying the friendly "Hello" spelt out by the ladders on the first stage (except on the NES version, which has different levels).

PLAY IT NOW ON: The NES version of *CLR* was recently released (along with the original) on the GBA in the guise of *Hudson Best: Lode Runner Collection*.



» This screen is really, really tedious, except on the SG1000 where most of "HELLO" is solid brick rather than gold bars.

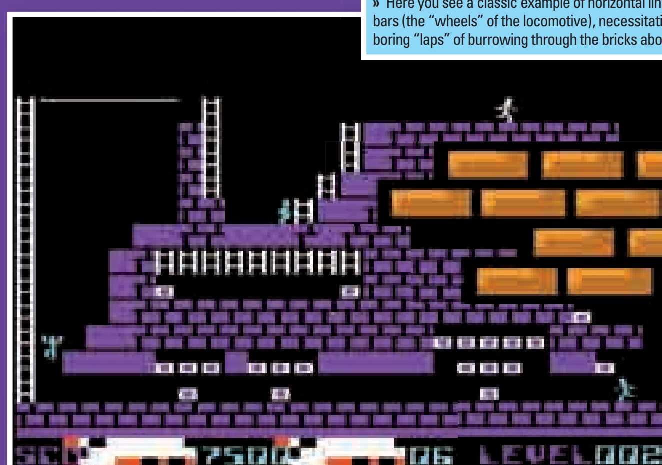
1985

PROFESSIONAL LODE RUNNER (C64)

Slightly oddly, *Championship Lode Runner* didn't appear on the Commodore 64. Instead, hardcore *LR* fans got *Professional Lode Runner*, a different sequel in very much the same vein, stuffed with absurdly hard and often tiresome levels requiring minutes of repetitive and dull trekking around. (Often characterised by long horizontal lines of gold bars in mid-air, which have to be collected by dropping onto them one at a time then going all the way round the level again to drop onto the next one.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: C64 emulators like VICE and CCS64.

» Here you see a classic example of horizontal lines of gold bars (the "wheels" of the locomotive), necessitating a dozen boring "laps" of burrowing through the bricks above.



1985

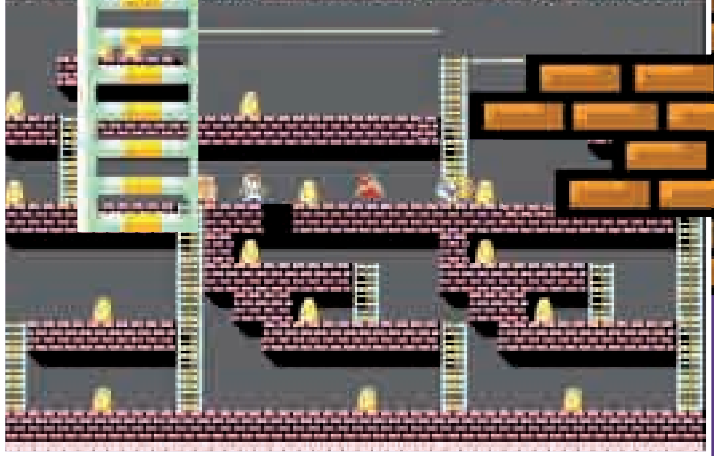
LODE RUNNER – GOLDEN LABYRINTH (ARCADE)

Evidently, Japanese gamers were gobbling up *Lode Runner* levels at a terrifying rate of knots, so a third data-set coin-op was released in the space of barely a year. There's nothing much of interest to be said about it, so we'll move right along.

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME



» Hang on – isn't that Bub from *Bubble Bobble* in the middle, wearing a parrot-mask disguise? LEAVE ME ALONE, DAMN YOU! Sob.



» You're pretty much buggered already here.

1985

LODE RUNNER'S RESCUE (C64, ATARI 800)

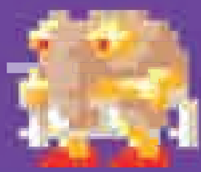
This, on the other hand, is just plain weird. Despite the name, it bears no resemblance whatsoever to *Lode Runner,* (it doesn't even feature any digging) and is in fact a barely-disguised rip-off of Atari's hit 1983 arcade game *Crystal Castles*, with a storyline that appears to be about retrieving Lode Runner's lost dog. W, as they say on the Internet, TF?

PLAY IT NOW ON: VICE, CCS64 or Atari800Win.



» In fairness, *LRR* does have one original feature not stolen from *Crystal Castles*, namely the fact that you can swim in water. It's still rubbish, though.





1986

LODE RUNNER - TEIKOKU KARANO DASSHATSU (ARCADE)

For the fourth *Lode Runner* coin-op, Irem tweaked the graphics and reduced the number of stages (just 30 this time), but also introduced one big innovation, in the form of the 15-level "Pair Game", where two players compete on a new set of screens. Both play the same level simultaneously, but if either of them gets caught by a monster, they both die (actually they just share one set of lives, but the effect is the same) and have to start the level again. A fun – and very tough – challenge is to finish two-player levels on your own, not only collecting the gold but also protecting the stationary and vulnerable second player.

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME

1987

SUPER LODE RUNNER 1 + 2 (FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM)

It's round about now that *Lode Runner* historians really start to get a headache. The two NES *Super Lode Runner* games run only on the Famicom Disk System peripheral for the console, which was never released outside Japan. Published by Irem rather than Hudson Soft, they're nevertheless largely just new-level data-sets, though they pinch a couple of features from Irem's arcade releases (like special gold bars and extra baddies buried in the floor until you unwittingly dig them out). In fact, *SLR1* is basically a port of *Teikoku Karano Dasshatsu* with some extra/changed levels. *SLR2* is another data-set release, and changes the enemies again, this time to ogreish monsters slightly resembling the level 1 boss from *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. The two-player levels have individual author credits, suggesting that they were user-created, continuing the tradition set by the first ever *Lode Runner.*

PLAY IT NOW ON: The FDS-supporting NES emulator VirtuaNES.



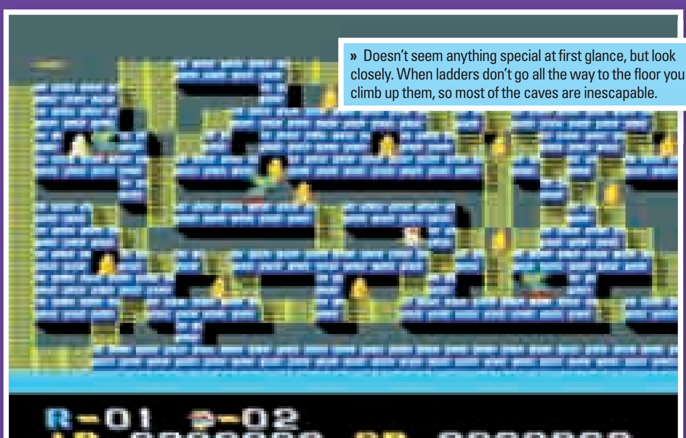
» This horrible level would go on to reappear in *Hyper Lode Runner* on the Game Boy.

1987

SUPER LODE RUNNER (MSX)

Irem also ported the first *Super Lode Runner* to the MSX, but it's not quite that simple. The NES version's first level didn't make it across for some reason, though after that the two games seem to have the same stages. The MSX version also doesn't scroll, though it manages to have fancier graphics than the previous MSX titles. However, in addition to the normal levels and the two-player mode, the MSX version also includes the "Challenge Game". This is an all-new set of stages (with passwords for each one) which are so mind-bogglingly, insanely difficult that your reporter can't even figure out how the first one could be theoretically possible, never mind actually do it. If you can beat it, write in and we'll make you king.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The very fine BlueMSX emulator.



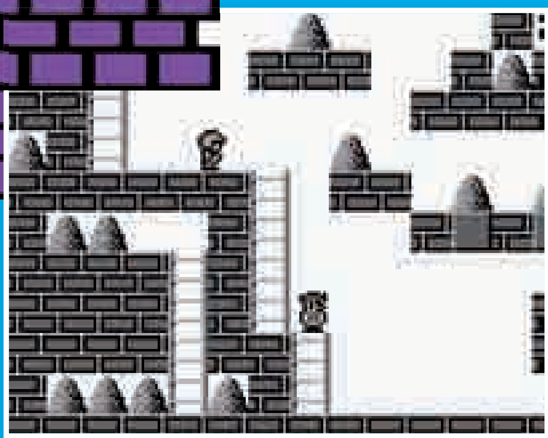
» Doesn't seem anything special at first glance, but look closely. When ladders don't go all the way to the floor you can't climb up them, so most of the caves are inescapable.

1989
HYPER LODE RUNNER (GAME BOY)

One of the strangest episodes in *Lode Runner*'s history came when it provided one of the Japanese launch games for Nintendo's Game Boy. It's not the zany storyline in which you storm the Labyrinth Of Doom, braving General Zod's mutant cyborg zombies (How unlucky, to already be a cyborg zombie, and then get mutated as well), it's not the slightly-tweaked gameplay (in which some levels have a key which opens a door to a timed sub-level), and it's not even the mind-mangling difficulty.

No, the really mental thing about *Hyper Lode Runner* is that it includes the traditional editor function – with which you can create up to four new levels, each with the timed sub-levels if desired – but doesn't include any battery-backed memory on the cart to save them to. Yep, the instant you switch off the Game Boy your levels are lost forever. No save, no password, no nothing. All gone.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Game Boy emulators like Visual Boy Advance, where by the magic of save states you can preserve your custom levels for posterity.



» This nasty little puzzle is the very first thing you see on the very first level of *Hyper LR*.

1990
LODE RUNNER – LOST LABYRINTH (PC ENGINE)

Despite the new name, this is actually just a bog-standard conversion of *Lode Runner 1*, with the graphics changed again so that the player is a heroic anime-type adventurer and the monsters are big Fifties-style robots, but everything else is just as it always was. The screen scrolls – not as much as the NES version – and there's no music or two-player mode, but it's nice and fast and there's a password-save facility after every screen. Semi-interestingly, legend abounds of a PC Engine *Lode Runner II*, but the only evidence of its existence is one very low-resolution picture of the title screen, and if anybody knows anything more concrete about it, they're keeping it very quiet.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The PCE emulator Magic Engine.

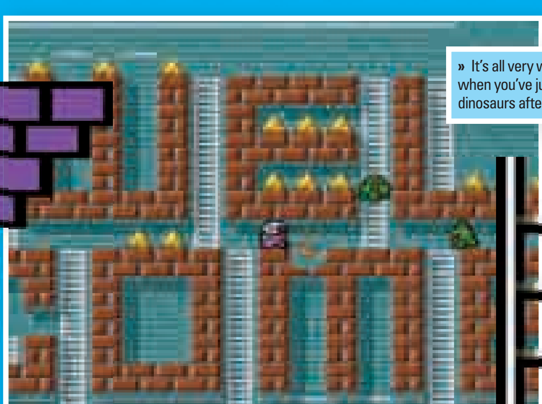


» "Ooh, a hot spring! I wonder if there's time for a quick dip?"

1993
BATTLE LODE RUNNER (PC ENGINE)

This unassuming little release is not only one of the jewels in the *Lode Runner* crown, but also of the PC Engine itself. It's something close to a perfect distillation of what the game's about, with the slickest and smoothest control of any *LR* game and well-designed levels that are hard without being cheap, repetitive or fiddly. What's more, in addition to the normal ("Puzzle") game and Edit mode, you also get the Battle mode implied by the title, where up to five players can compete in three different multi-player games on a new set of levels. Only one of them offers the option of CPU opposition, but they're all frantic and gloriously entertaining as everyone charges around the single-screen stages trying to grab the power-ups that are vital to trap the other players in pits. Both modes are blessed with lovely cutesy *Bomberman* graphics (we're back with Hudson Soft again) and excellent Japanese-style music, and the whole package is just about flawless.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Magic Engine.



» It's all very well saying "WELCOME" when you've just sent a load of bloodthirsty dinosaurs after me, *Battle Lode Runner*. Tch.

1994
LODE RUNNER – THE LEGEND RETURNS (PC/SATURN)

Lode Runner had largely been a Japan-only and console-only concern for almost ten years when someone finally decided to give it another outing in the West, so novice *LR* publishers Sierra had a brand-new version created, in keeping with the remaking style of the time – which is to say, it was a bit of a mess. (The notion of updating classic old games was still pretty novel at this time, and nobody had quite figured out how to do it properly yet.) Tiny graphics and an opening clutch of vast levels with almost nothing going on in them bored most of the audience away before things got interesting, with more inventive features like levels played in near-darkness except for the area illuminated by your torch.

PLAY IT NOW ON: You can just about get this to run on a modern PC, with some faffing around, but the 1995 semi-sequel *Lode Runner Online* is a better bet, so check out the entry for that instead.



» This level's even more boring than it looks.

1994
LODE RUNNER TWIN (SNES)

Picking up the *Battle Lode Runner* ball and running with it, *Lode Runner Twin* is actually four games in one. It's basically a cartoonified version of *Lode Runner 1* featuring – for the first time in the series' history – a plotline. You get two one-player games (the levels-in-sequence story mode, and a "challenge" game with 50 different selectable levels and various selectable graphics styles) and two split-screen two-player modes (either play a single level of your own choosing, or a randomly-selected set of ten). Nothing dramatically special, but it's decent enough fun.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The SNES emu ZSNES.

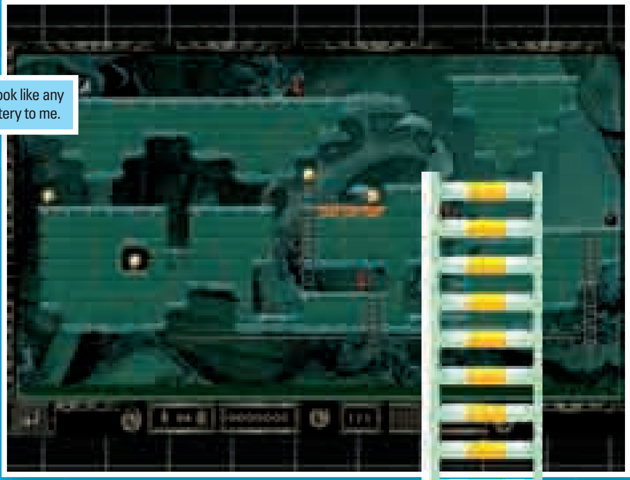


» The busy, pseudo-3D graphics get in the way a bit – it's actually easier to play from the handily large radar screen.

1995
LODE RUNNER ONLINE: MAD MONKS' REVENGE (PC/MAC)

The name here is a bit misleading, because *MMR* is basically just a tweaked version of *The Legend Returns* with a few extra levels and power-ups and the like, along with the ability to play a normal two-player game across an Internet connection. It scarcely justifies a new release and title, but on the upside it was coded for 32-bit Windows rather than old 16-bit versions (as *TLR* was), so you should get it to run more easily on a modern PC than its predecessor.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Your PC. The game's author, Todd Daggert, has actually made the full version freely downloadable on his website. (Google "Todd Daggert" to get straight to the download.)

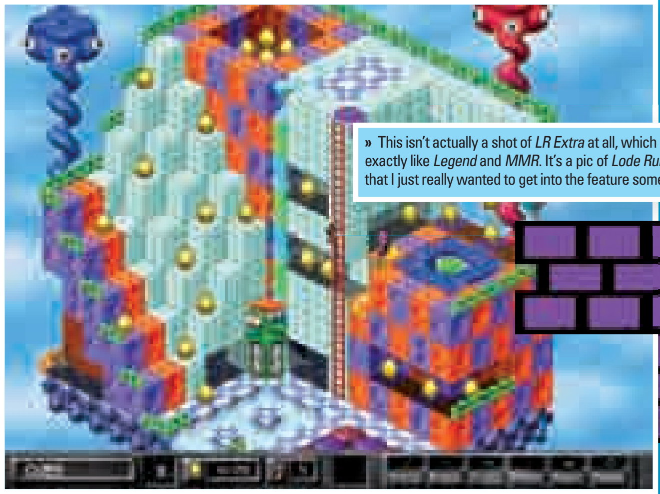


» This doesn't look like any kind of a monastery to me.

1997
LODE RUNNER EXTRA (PLAYSTATION)

This is actually just called "Lode Runner" on the box, and is in fact a belated PlayStation release of *The Legend Returns*, but with a little something extra. The standard TRL game is the default, but selecting Lode Runner Extra from the menu gives you a whole new set to play with instead, which as far as I can tell is exclusive to the PlayStation game.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Original copies are pretty hard to find, but it runs well in the PS emulator ePSXe.



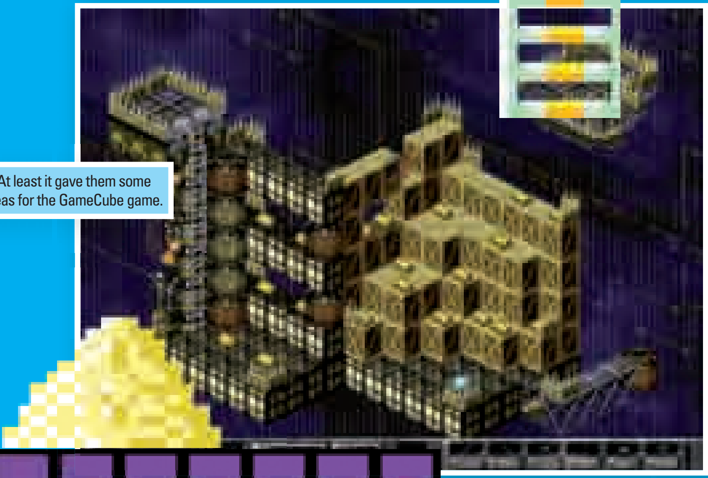
» This isn't actually a shot of *LR Extra* at all, which looks exactly like *Legend* and *MMR*. It's a pic of *Lode Runner 2* that I just really wanted to get into the feature somewhere.

1998
LODE RUNNER 2 (PC)



The Nineties remakes, mediocre as they were, rejuvenated the *Lode Runner* name and 1998 saw the series' big leap into 3D. Developer Presage created a beautiful game, full of varied Escher-esque enviroments in an isometric perspective that was easy to navigate, thanks in part to a flexible and friendly control interface and game structure, and with a thoughtful addition of power-ups. Then, with the hard work done, they handed the job of level design to a monkey. It's as if nobody told the level designer that *Lode Runner 2* was in 3D. Just look at the screenshot. See that little bloke in red just above centre? That's you. ("Jake Peril", excellently.) You've just dug through one crate from the top level, and now you only need to jump down and right to the next floor and start collecting those gold bars, right? Wrong. You're stuck, and any second that crate's going to fill back in and you're going to die. Every level of *Lode Runner 2* is full of "invisible walls" like this, where routes that your character would clearly be able to take are blocked off for no reason at all. *Lode Runner 2* is one of the most cack-handed games this writer's seen in almost 30 years of videogaming.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Lode Runner 2* works fine on modern PCs, so you can take a look for yourself.



» At least it gave them some ideas for the GameCube game.

1999

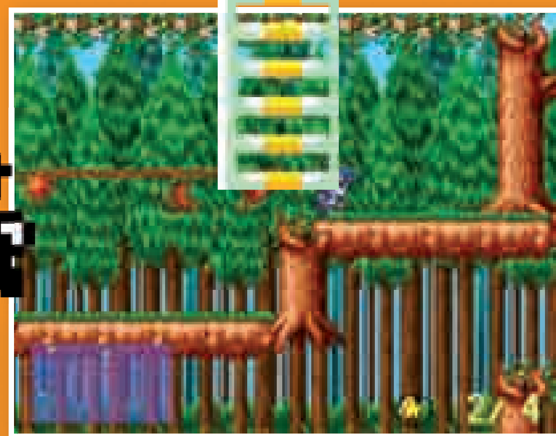
LODE RUNNER 3D (N64)

The fate that befell the next *Lode Runner* game was scarcely any less depressing, albeit in a different way. Perhaps learning some lessons from *LR2*, the Infogrames-developed *Lode Runner 3D* is one of gaming's lost treasures. Moving the gameplay into 3D without the arbitrary inconsistency of its immediate predecessor, *LR3D* sticks closely to the original template while using the extra axis to add a maze-like facet to the platforming antics. It's pure "adventure playground" gaming, working from the same core principles as *Super Mario 64*, and recommendations don't come much higher than that. So why is it depressing? Because *Lode Runner 3D* is an absolutely fantastic game (it deserves a feature to itself to properly explain why it's so great – for now you'll just have to take my word on it), but if five Retro Gamer readers go out to buy a copy after reading this article, they'll have just doubled its worldwide sales. Very few games this good have ever sold so poorly and received so little critical acclaim (the usual consolation prize for brilliant games nobody buys), and that's a videogaming tragedy.

PLAY IT NOW ON: It runs perfectly in the splendid Project 64 emulator, but it really needs the original N64 controller to get the best out of it. You should be able to find the original cart for no more than a fiver, so do the right thing.



» This screenshot actually depicts no fewer than five brand-new *Lode Runner* gameplay elements. Bet you can't spot them all.



» This picture probably tells you everything you need to know about *Power Lode Runner.*

1999

POWER LODE RUNNER (SNES)

And then, inexplicably, there's this. Released the same year as the wonderful N64 game and a year after the beautiful 3D incarnation on the PC, Power *Lode Runner* is a hideous mess of a game that set the series back about ten years. Twee 2D graphics depicting woodland creatures who appear to be collecting logs and stones in bubbles rather than shiny gold bars, a viewpoint so crazily zoomed-in it'll take you 10 minutes to recognise the levels as being basically the ones from the original game again, and a wading-through-quicksand pace that'll make you wish for death by halfway through the first stage are just three of the contributing factors marking out *PLR* as the worst *Lode Runner* game ever. Thankfully, it's also stuffed with countless nested levels of impenetrable Japanese menus, so you'll probably be driven off long before you have to experience any of the other gameplay horrors that we don't have room to list here.

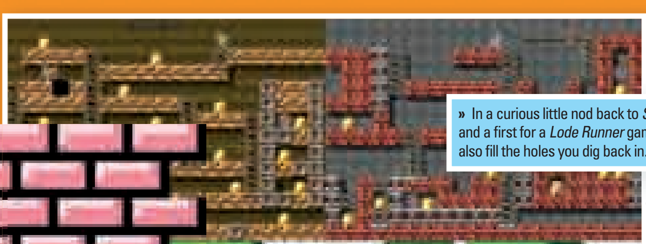
PLAY IT NOW ON: ZSNES, assuming you've committed some awful crime you wish to serve a penance for.

2000

LODE RUNNER – THE DIG FIGHT (ARCADE)

The fifth arcade *Lode Runner* – published by Psikyo, better known for its scrolling shoot-'em-ups – marked a significant change in the game concept, designed to maximise profit. While time limits had featured in previous coin-op versions of the game, here the time limit is the central factor. Rather than lives, you have a clock that's replenished by collecting icons and completing screens and reduced by collisions with monsters, and while the game has several different modes (indeed, there are two substantially differently-structured versions of the coin-op), all of them involve clearing only a small handful of screens before your game is over. The other core feature is the clever twin-screen best-of-five two-player mode, in which you race not to collect gold bars but to smash eggs, each of which releases a monster which can only damage the opposing player (though it can get in your way without killing you).

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME, although sadly there's no way of getting around the tiny screen area caused by the twin monitors.



» In a curious little nod back to *Space Panic*, and a first for a *Lode Runner* game, you can also fill the holes you dig back in.



» The Story mode appears to be set in space, judging by the *Alien*-esque monsters (bottom right) and the second character's spacesuit (not pictured). Although maybe he just thinks it looks cool.

2000

LODE RUNNER (WONDERSWAN)

The turn of the millenium was a big time for *Lode Runner*, and 2000's second release in the series showed up on the black-and-white incarnation of Bandai's ill-timed Wonderswan handheld. The Banpresto-coded title is a curious little game, with all-new levels, bonus items to collect and new features like blocks which collapse when you stand on them. Each level starts with you choosing between two characters – a little kid who runs fast, and a slower spaceman whose advantages aren't immediately apparent (though the all-Japanese story/menu options may offer a clue). It's intriguing and slick and well worth a look if you can dig up a copy somewhere.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Runs very nicely on the Wonderswan emulator WSCamp, if you switch the buttons around in the config menu so they're on the right sides.

2000

LODE RUNNER DOMUDOMU DAN NO YABOU (GAMEBOY COLOR)

There was still time in 2000 for yet another developer to try its luck at making a *Lode Runner* game, and this time Xing had a go. It came up with two modes, one a zoomed-in 50-level version of the original game and the other a Story mode which is completely incomprehensible without a fairly good command of Japanese. Garish colours and gluey movement make even Original mode not much fun to play, and there's nothing much here to make it worth the effort.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance.



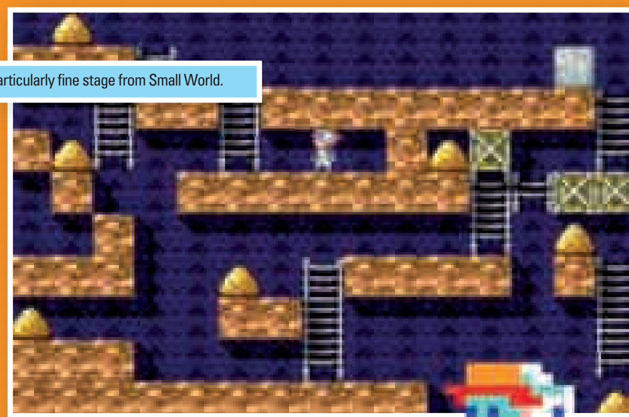
» The game's a bit rubbish, but the little bank-manager enemies are sweet.

2002

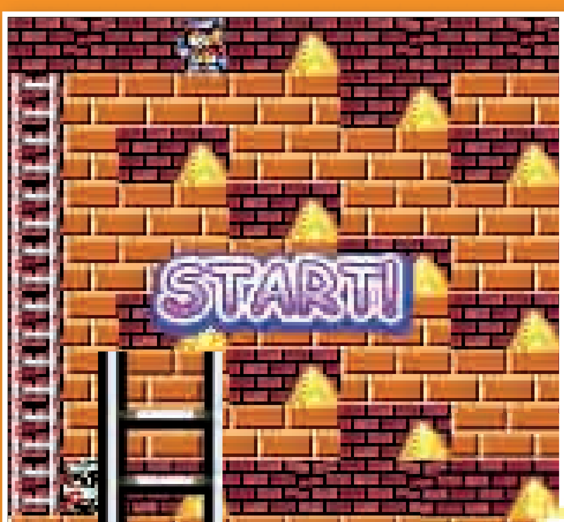
LODE RUNNER (GBA)

Sure enough, 2002 saw still another new set of hands at the *Lode Runner* wheel, with Success given the controls. The result was a game pitched somewhere between the coin-ops and Hudson's NES games, with cute graphics and a traditionally forbidding difficulty level, but this time one founded much more in head-scratching puzzle-solving than taxingly precise platform-running – many levels have no baddies at all, and there are no time limits, so it's just you against some bricks. You can also choose from two level sets – Small World, with very compact stages, and Middle World, which zooms out the graphics to provide more screen area without scrolling. Never released in the West but 99% in English, this is an excellent introduction to the principles of *Lode Runner* for beginners.

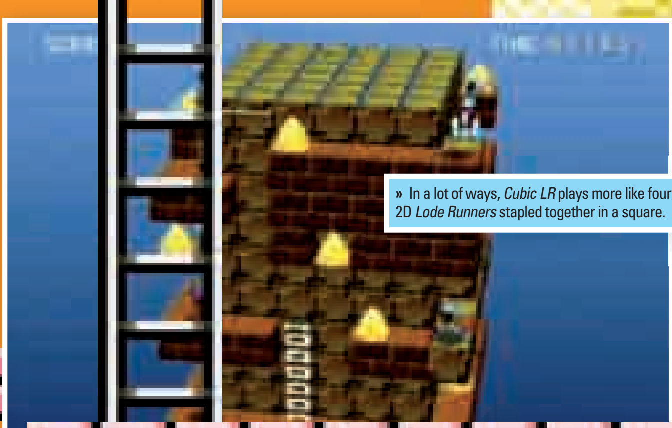
PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance



» This is a particularly fine stage from Small World.



» This is the whole of Level 7, for example.



» In a lot of ways, *Cubic LR* plays more like four ordinary 2D *Lode Runners* stapled together in a square.

2003

LODE RUNNER (MOBILE)

This all-new 60-level Java release from Hudson Soft packs a lot into its tiny space. The opening stages are miniscule, and can often be completed in under 10 seconds, but later ones offer large, scrolling levels in a variety of graphical styles (which can be switched off in favour of a classic look if you find them confusing on the teeny screen of a phone). The ability to play any level at any time makes it an ideal mobile game.

PLAY IT NOW ON: As well as working on a wide variety of phones, you can play this on your PC via the splendidly-named "N-Gage Cool!" emulator.

2003

CUBIC LODE RUNNER (GAMECUBE/PS2)

At this point, since we've already considerably over-written the commissioned length of the feature, we'll skip over the Japanese GBA compilation of NES ports, the cute keyring game and the new DS version (which may well be out by the time you're reading this), and move straight on to the last completely original *Lode Runner* game to have been released to date. Part of a budget series of remakes (which also included *Star Soldier* and *Adventure Island*), *CLR* was in essence *Lode Runner 2* done properly, though sadly without the stunning Escher graphics. It's solid but fiddly in play, with the need to constantly adjust the camera and mentally transpose controls 45-degrees (to account for the isometric perspective) detracting a little from some fiendishly cunning levels. And that's it. If you can think of any *Lode Runner* games we've missed, please don't hesitate to throw yourself off a tall building. See you next time!

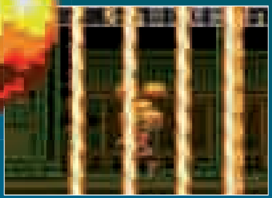
PLAY IT NOW ON: Your GameCube or PS2. You should be able to pick up an import copy for around a tenner.



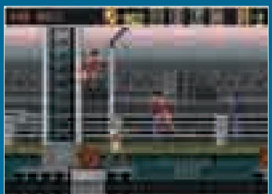
THE CLASSIC GAME

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

Join Retro Gamer as it dons a stealth suit, grabs a handful of throwing stars and replays one of the Mega Drive's greatest platformers of all time



» Musashi's new magical skills allowed him to do anything from creating a powerful force field to summoning huge dragons



» One of the few levels that retains the two-tiered level structure of the original game

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **VERSION FEATURED:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1989 (1990 UK)
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER/ACTION
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+

Life was good for UK gamers when the Mega Drive appeared at the latter end of 1990. Thanks to being released a year after the Genesis and two years after the Japanese machine debuted there was a decent line-up of launch games to choose from. Sure, dross like *Italia World Cup 90* and the pack-in horror that was *Altered Beast* spoilt things a little, but there were still plenty of classy titles. One such gem being the rather excellent *The Revenge Of Shinobi*, Sega's superb follow-up to its 1987 arcade hit *Shinobi*.

Sega's original coin-op was a fast-paced actioner in the vein of Namco's *Rolling Thunder* that required you to race through each stage as ninja master Joe Musashi and rescue a set number of kidnapped children. Musashi dutifully returned for the impressive sequel, and the end result was a blinding mish-mash of platforming and action that featured stunning looking visuals, a thumpingly good soundtrack and plenty of new gameplay enhancements. There were no children to rescue this time around; you just had to make your way through 24 challenging stages and defeat the head of evil crime syndicate Neo Zeed. Easy right? Think again.

While *Shinobi* raced along like an ostrich on roller skates, the pace of *Revenge* was more sedate, with Musashi – now sporting a fetching white outfit – nonchalantly strolling through each level with all the urgency of an 80-year old pensioner taking a trip to the post office. Sure, there were still plenty of enemies to do battle against – the first stage alone threw samurai warriors, vicious dogs and numerous ninjas at you – but now it was possible to take in the sumptuously designed levels that Sega had created while you leisurely kicked ninja ass.

Although *Revenge*'s speed took a little while to become accustomed to, Sega's decision to use an energy bar instead of the "one hit and you're dead" approach of *Shinobi* was a stroke of genius and proved particularly useful when you were battling against *Revenge*'s often-spectacular bosses. Other notable improvements/amendments to the core



» This memorable boss is a huge truck carrying a guided missile. You need to destroy several key points in order to stop it

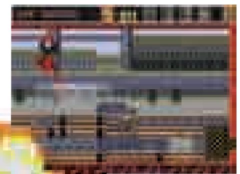
gameplay included being able to start off with a set number of shuriken (although there was a handy "infinity" cheat for the less skilled) getting to choose between four distinct types of magic and a handy double jump to clear those tricky gaps. Wooden crates were also judiciously littered throughout each stage and once opened, would supply the ninja master with extra shurikens, health and magic. It

WHILE SHINOBI RACED ALONG LIKE AN OSTRICH ON ROLLER SKATES, THE PACE OF REVENGE OF SHINOBI WAS FAR MORE SEDATE



COMIC CAPERS

Start making decent headway into *The Revenge Of Shinobi*'s later levels and it becomes obvious that Sega's developers were influenced by various comic books of the time. Both Spider-Man and Batman appear as bosses at the end of stage six, while a Godzilla look-alike can be found at the end of the seventh level's missile factory. Sega made a number of revisions to the code – no doubt to avoid potential lawsuits – and subsequently changed Batman and Godzilla. Batman turned into a flying demon while Godzilla changed into a skeletal monstrosity complete with bleach white bones and showing organs.
One final nod should go to the weird Terminator/Hulk hybrid that can be found in the junkyard at the end of level four. Obviously modelled on Arnold Schwarzenegger, he turns increasingly greener, before eventually revealing his metallic insides and subsequently exploding.



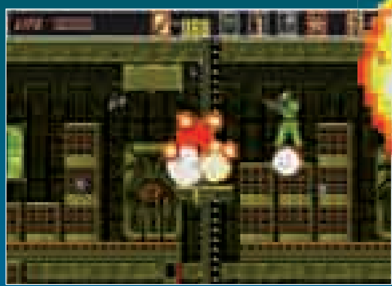
was also possible to gain a power-up that would enhance your throwing stars and provide you with a deadly sword – at least until you received damage from an enemy. Care must be taking when opening crates though, as certain boxes contained bombs that would rob you of your health.

Thanks to its many enhancements, *Revenge* was a huge leap over the original *Shinobi*, both technically and artistically. The popular two-tiered levels of the original game may have been confined to a few select stages, but they were arguably superior to any of the efforts seen in the 1987 coin-op. One level set on a bustling bridge had you leaping in and out of the foreground, as you frantically avoided killer nuns, on-coming sports cars and breaks in the bridge itself, while another stage had you invading a heavily protected military base, which required you to constantly leap over both sides of a giant fence as you dealt with gun-toting soldiers, dangerous Alsatians and flamethrower-wielding Rambo look-alikes. If the level design was an improvement on *Shinobi*, the actual aesthetics were a revelation, with the slick Mega Drive title being a million miles away from the rather functionary look that had served its predecessor so well two years previously. Thanks to the Mega Drive's extra graphical grunt and the imagination of Sega's in-house team, the many locations that Musashi journeyed through boasted a staggering amount of variety and were crammed with startling detail. One level saw the stealthy one making his way through a mystical looking Japanese forest, while a later stage had him racing across the top of a speeding train. Other visual treats included huge, cascading waterfalls, moonlit walks across skyscraper skylines and – in one of *Revenge*'s only frustrating moments – a frantic dash through a seemingly impenetrable labyrinth that's absolutely swarming with enemies.



» Sod off Rambo; you had your own Mega Drive game!

If *Revenge*'s levels created a canvas of startling beauty then Yuzo Koshiro's scintillating tunes were surely the finishing strokes of Sega's masterpiece. While inferior to his later *Streets Of Rage* compositions – deemed by many as some of Koshiro's best work – a quick listen to the likes of "Terrible Beat" and "Over The Bay" give a subtle hint of the musical greatness that was to come. "Terrible Beat" in particular, which accompanies every intense boss fight, is a superb tune – all rolling drums and electrifying synths – and perfectly captures the terror of going up against *Revenge*'s many deadly bosses.



» If you had plenty of spare lives, hari kari was a great way of destroying *Revenge*'s more troublesome foes

Ah yes, those marvellous mayors of destruction. From the moment you encounter the huge katana-wielding samurai at the end of level one, to the final showdown with Zeed himself, *Revenge*'s bosses never fail to impress in both their meticulous design and ingenious attack patterns. Granted, the stiff animation (particularly on Godzilla) tends to give away their age somewhat, but the bosses still manage to enthuse you with the same sense of wonderment you had when you first encountered them. And that's the beauty of *The Revenge Of Shinobi*. Even 17 years after its initial release, *Revenge* still manages to impress, delight and entertain in equal measures and remains one of the Mega Drive's most enjoyable games. High praise indeed.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

E-SWAT: CYBER POLICE
SYSTEMS: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1990

SPACE HARRIER II
SYSTEMS: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1988

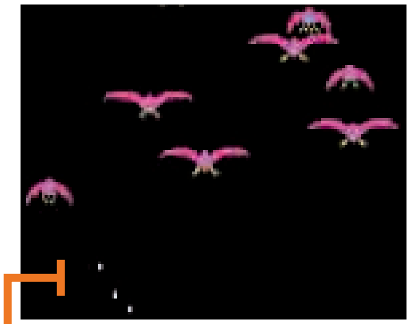
STRIDER
SYSTEMS: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1990



BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR...

THE MOTHERSHIP IN PHOENIX



GAME INFO



- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **RELEASED:** 1980
- **PUBLISHER:** CENTURI/TAITO
- **DEVELOPER:** AMSTAR ELECTRONICS

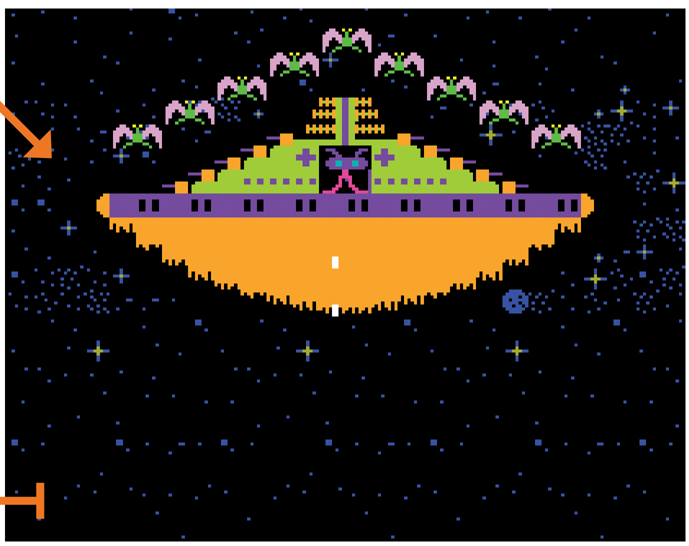
Phoenix was an arcade game for several reasons. Not only was it an excellent shoot-'em-up by American company Amstar Electronics, when Japan was already making the genre its own (Amstar was based in Phoenix Arizona, hence the name), but it's also one of, if not the earliest example of a shoot-'em-up with a final separate boss section: the fear-inducing Mothership, straight out of hell's depths. So gear up space pilot, because you're the last man left standing against the genocide of humanity.

It's a harrowing experience reaching this final confrontation, drifting through empty space facing off against the top four squadrons in the alien invasion force. Things begin with some classical music, enhancing the desolation of cold space and acting as a reminder of the human heritage you're fighting for. Suddenly, without warning, the first squadron of 16 small birds looms out of the blackness; the battle has begun. Their perfect formation isn't kept and soon they're making blind runs and kamikaze dives! You must hold the position and face this enemy head-on, firing lasers and using your ship's shield generator. By now the music is replaced with screeches which adapt as the birds move, almost taunting you. The third and fourth squadrons are eggs out of which hatch larger Phoenix-like birds. You fire wildly, the lasers cutting their wings one at a time, but suddenly the depraved cads regenerate these lost limbs. The only certain way to kill them is aiming for the head – it's going to be a long struggle to reach the ultimate enemy. But you must maintain, godammit!

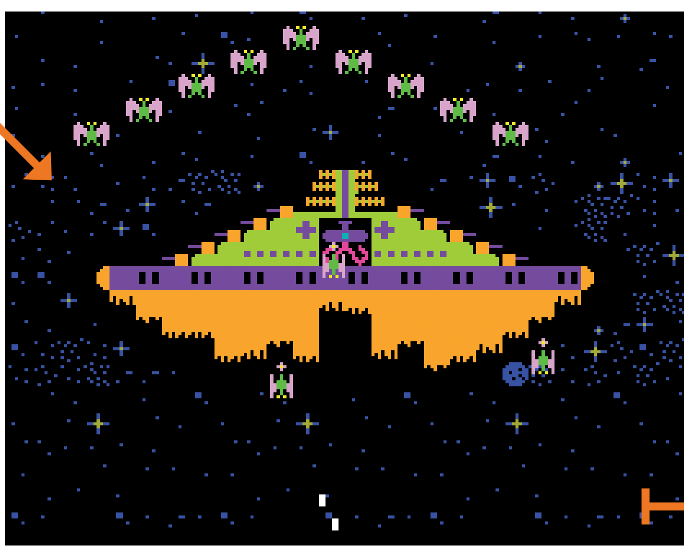
And then finally it appears, The Mothership. There's no time to relax since a fresh squadron of bird-meat needs killing and the alien commander is gunning for your blood. So have your weapons armed and your thrusters burning hot. The first task is to burn through that massive orange shielding on the Mothership's underside, whilst avoiding random squadron attacks.

Even after managing to simultaneously blast a clear path through the hull and avoid being incinerated by hostile fire, there's still the small matter of a moving shield-conveyor-belt. After blasting a hole clean through it the purple band continues to move, thereby carrying the vulnerable cavity away until it disappears off one end and emerges on the other. There's no point even trying to aim anymore, just keep hitting the fire button and pray to your deity of choice that something makes it through when the hole makes its return journey. With the original *Star Wars* film having come out three years previously, the similarities to the Death Star trench run are undeniable.

Eventually, should you be lucky enough to avoid the barrage of kamikaze dives and the alien commander's stream of fire, a burning orb of man-made death (the best kind of death) will find its way inside the alien's supreme chamber. The resulting chain-reaction detonates not only the massive carrier vessel, but also the surrounding attack squadron. You've just obliterated the first shoot-'em-up boss ever (well, probably), and your reward is? Another classical composition of music for you to saviour, and then once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.

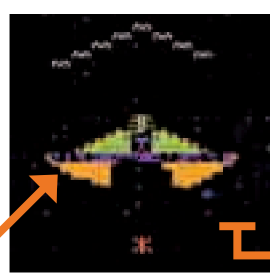


» To begin with the Mothership has a full hull and several back-up fighters. But you… You have gutsy determination!

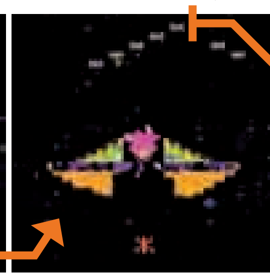


» Weave between incoming shots, avoid enemy fighters, and keep firing like a deranged madman. Maniacal laughing is optional.

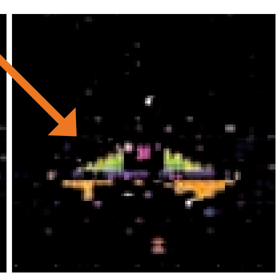
THEIR FORMATION ISN'T KEPT AND SOON THEY'RE MAKING BLIND RUNS AND KAMIKAZE DIVES, BUT YOU MUST MAINTAIN, GODAMMIT!



» The orange shielding has been worn away, now's your chance to breach the purple conveyor belt and land a lucky shot.



» Yeehah! Eat deadly lasers of death and die, you soon-to-be-dead harbinger of ultimate… death!



» Shrapnel and debris go flying everywhere, but sadly this isn't the end. The only salvation from this war is death.

eMag

遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

NOT BY DOSTOEVSKY

SIN & PUNISHMENT: SUCCESSOR TO THE EARTH

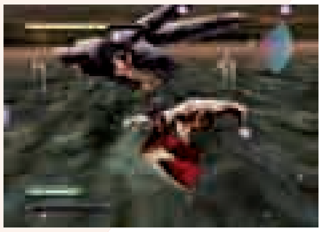
There's so much more to Japanese gaming than date simulators and impenetrable Mahjong titles. This month we look at Sin & Punishment, Treasure's N64 epic that sadly never made it to UK soil.

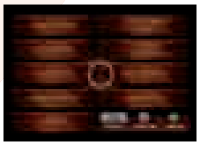
IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** ESP
- » **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** N64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £30+
- » **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** *PANZER DRAGON ZWEI*

While the original *Panzer Dragoon* was a visual delight, Team Andromeda really upped the ante on its superb sequel. Like *Sin & Punishment*, *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* featured an incredible amount of inventiveness, gorgeous visuals, striking sound and terrifying end of level bosses. Best of all, it shouldn't cost you more than a tenner, so go look for it.





Interesting fact
While *Sin & Punishment* never received a Western release, it is possible to play it in full English providing you have the required plug-in that can be found at www.romhacking.net/trans/920.



» We were going to video record this stunning level for the coverdisc, then we realised we no longer made one. Doh!

メガ駆動機構

If there was any justice left in the world Busted would have never been allowed near instruments, George Lucas would have been strung up for tinkering with his original *Star Wars* trilogy and Treasure's utterly superb *Sin & Punishment* would be heralded as one of the greatest N64 games ever made.

Playing *Sin & Punishment* for the first time is akin to witnessing a miracle unfolding before your eyes. It's like watching a child being born into the world – it's a moment that will stay with you forever.

Indeed, *Sin & Punishment* (or *Tsumi To Batsu – Chikyuu No Keishousha* to give it its full Japanese name) is an utterly superb blaster, and some six years after its release it remains within the upper echelons of N64 hits and has become yet another feather in Treasure's painfully overloaded cap.

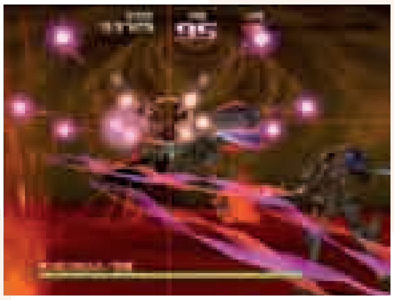
Super Mario 64 may have been a three-dimensional stroke of genius, and Link's first 3D adventure rightly deserved every accolade that was bestowed upon it, but in our minds Treasure's magical opus is every bit as important and deserves just as much praise as its better known peers – even if it is just an on-rails shoot-'em-up.

To say *Sin & Punishment* was an aesthetic delight is an understatement of the highest degree; even today its jaw-dropping visuals and pulsating soundtrack will leave you giddy and make you wonder just how on earth Treasure actually managed to make the N64 look just so damn good. Sure, the smear-o-vision that all N64 games were unfortunately prone to suffer from is still present and correct, but even poor output can't hide the majesty of Treasure's sumptuous shooter. *Wave Race* may have boasted sublime water physics that allowed you to practically

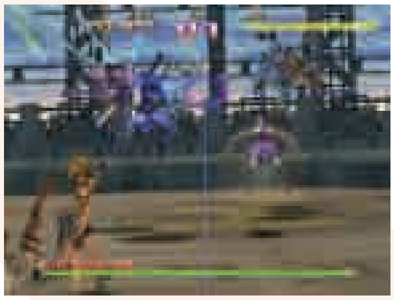
FROM POYCHI ROBO

GAMES FROM THE EAST WHICH NEVER MADE IT TO UK SOIL

N PROMISE



» One of the later stages sees you donning a huge suit and taking on one big-ass boss in the spectacular end of stage battle



» When this girl gets bored off hurling soldiers at you'll she'll start flinging bloody great pieces of metal. Careful now



» She may not look all that but wait until you see her in motion

feel every bump and swell, and *Lylat Wars* perfectly captured the atmosphere of Lucas' aforementioned space opera, but nothing sung on the N64 like *Sin & Punishment*. As it had done with Sega's Mega Drive and Saturn, Treasure (with a little help from Nintendo's R&D) pushed the N64 to its limits and delivered some of the most astounding visuals to ever grace the machine. From the very moment your character races into the screen and starts destroying enemies with gay abandonment the action doesn't back down for a second. *Sin & Punishment* races along at a blindingly smooth pace and never falters in its efforts to amaze and astound.

Spectacular explosions fill the screen, impressive lighting effects showcase Treasure's fantastic levels and stage design, while the many bosses that are thrown at you will cause your jaw to drop. If *Sin & Punishment* can be summed up in one stage though it has to be the gravity-defying aircraft carrier level. Floating around on a huge piece of metal, your on-screen persona mows down wave after wave after wave of enemies while the entire level constantly spins and rotates around him; it's an absolutely stunning effect and will make you question if you're actually playing a N64 game – it really is that good. Of course, all this technical wizardry came at a price, and the only downside to *Sin & Punishment* is that everything features a very low poly count and can look rather basic. It was a tricky choice that Treasure obviously had to make (detail over smoothness) but it made the right decision. And besides, there's so many spectacular effects going on you won't really notice anyway.



» Weave your way through the bullets and fill that boss with hot plasma

For all its graphical splendour, *Sin & Punishment*'s gameplay, while simple, was no less impressive and made full use of the N64's ergonomically designed controller. Aiming was handled via the analogue stick, while the Z trigger was used to fire (or doubled up as a handy sword if an enemy strayed to close too you). Due to its on-rails nature, character movement was handled by the left and right C buttons, while a double tap of said buttons enabled you to execute a nifty roll – very handy for getting out of tight situations. It was also possible to jump or double jump and Treasure had also included an option for either left or right-handed players (very useful). The intuitive control system enabled you to quickly grasp the controls and simply get down to creating as much on-screen carnage as possible. While Treasure had included a reasonable plot and decent voice acting (all in English) it was the inventive gameplay, level design and subsequent replay value that proved to be *S&P's* real draw.

Despite its restrictiveness, Treasure's game gave you the impression of being far more open than it was and variety was used to ensure that you never got bored enough to question the linear levels that you were racing through. As a result boss encounters featured heavily throughout *Sin & Punishment*'s short running time (it can be bested in a few hours) and each and every battle was a joy to play, even if they did give a sly wink to past Treasure titles. It didn't matter though, Treasure has invigorated *Sin & Punishment* with the sort of instant accessibility that had once been seen in the likes of *Space Harrier* and *After Burner* and while the game itself was far from original, it had been created with such obvious excitement that you couldn't help but fall in love with it. Six years later and the relationship is still going strong.

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: STEVE ELLIS
DATE OF BIRTH: 22.2.1974
FIRST JOB: CHECKOUT AT TOYS R US
CURRENTLY: DIRECTOR OF FREE RADICAL DESIGN
FAVOURITE FILM: 7EVEN



» The essential accessory for every modern home.

STEVE ELLIS

HE'S THE QUIET ONE BEHIND SUCH BIG NOISES AS GOLDENEYE AND TIMESPLITTERS. PAUL DRURY HAS CAKE WITH STEVE ELLIS AND DISCOVERS WHAT SORT OF PERSON DEVELOPS PS3 TITLES FOR A DAY JOB AND RELAXES AT THE WEEKEND BY KNOCKING UP SPECTRUM EMULATORS...

As I park my Skoda in the company car park between a Porsche Targa and a Ferrari 355, I sense things are going well at Free Radical Design. I'm greeted by a charming receptionist, ushered past expansive studios and wait for company director Steve Ellis in a plush meeting room. He arrives, shortly followed by a tray of cream cakes.

"We're trying to get the little things right," Steve explains, eyeing up the cream horn. "We've got 120 employees now and there are publishers and the press to meet…"

It's a long way from the humble offices in the Lenton area of Nottingham, where in the late Nineties five fugitives from Rare plotted to get FRD off the ground. It must seem even further from grim Stoke-on-Trent, Steve's hometown. By way of compensation, his apologetic parents bought him a Spectrum for Christmas in 1982 and the wide-eyed eight-year-old could explore brave new worlds beyond the potteries.

"It came with *Snakepit* and *Atic Atac*, but best of all it came with the book! That was all you needed to program the Spectrum. You don't get that anymore. It even went into machine code. Literally, it had everything you needed to teach yourself and that was pretty much what happened. I did enrol for a night class at the local college, but as I was eight, I had to get a letter of permission from school."

Child prodigy Steve did his headmaster proud and by the time he took his 'O' level in Computer Studies, he'd cracked machine code. At age 11. By 15, he had added an 'A' level, but that was when the school system decided to hit Escape.

"I wasn't allowed near computers after that, for doing things I shouldn't," confesses the one-time hacker. "They had a network and that was a new thing. You could do things on other people's computers. I remember remote viewing the teacher's screen to find he was remote viewing mine…"

The too cool for school Steve kept his coding fingers agile by turning his attention to hacking Spectrum games and sending the resulting pokes to Crash magazine. "I used the Multiface cartridge to search for counter decrements. There are only three or four ways you can decrease a value in memory, so I'd get it to look for those code signatures and replace them with something that didn't. Infinite lives! Well, sometimes…"

Ah, the secrets of the cheaters. Steve even went so far as to sell his underhanded cleverness in the pages of Crash and if you were one of the 30 people that bought his Games Master cassette we'd love to hear from you.

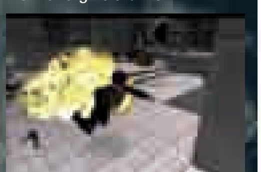
By the time higher education beckoned, Steve was allowed back into the academic fold and studied Computer Science at Staffordshire University. It not only provided

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YOU MUST PLAY...

GoldenEye

As debuts go, this takes some beating. Ground breaking at the time and still eminently playable, *GoldenEye* showed that thoughtful use of a licence could actually help rather than hinder the gaming experience. The single-player story mode has an impressive tempo and the gunplay has an intuitiveness sadly lacking in so many modern first-person shooters, but it's the multi-player death matches that truly unleash your inner agent. Think of Steve alone in that room making it all work and give thanks.







» **Above left:** Young Steve prepares to be trounced by a grown man in a denim jacket. God bless the Eighties. **Above right:** *Haze* for PS3 is Steve's current project. If you don't count the Speccy stuff…



» **Right:** The Japanese version of *TS2* was subtitled 'Invaders Of The History' and you couldn't shoot monkeys (a protected species over there) unless they shot at you first. Crazy but true.

a useful qualification, but after a particularly dull placement in Stone writing software for a Waste Water Management system he realised commercial work was not for him.

"I bought my first issue of Edge – number 29, if I remember – and started applying for jobs speculatively. I'd be making half games and doing Amiga demos, but I'd never really saw the games industry as an option. Then I saw all the job ads and thought maybe that would be fun. I had a few offers and accepted the one from Rare. I didn't really know who they were and certainly didn't know they'd done *Atic Atac* when they were Ultimate: Play The Game, but when I arrived at the interview, it was pretty obvious. The place was full of old posters and awards."

Steve believes it was his ability to code in assembly language – an unusual skill then and an even less common talent now – that landed him the post and after a month of acclimatising, he was assigned to his first project. In something of a departure for Rare, famed for its cute platformers, the company had secured a *Bond* licence and were one of the privileged few allowed to develop for Nintendo's new console.

"The 'Dream Team' as it was known at the time," Steve grimaces. "All that nonsense. The *GoldenEye* licence was actually there from the start and it was supposed to be out in time for the film. Rare was half owned by Nintendo and were sheltered from a lot of the realities of the videogames industry. The Stamper brothers [Heads of Rare] could say it would be ready when it was ready and Nintendo pretty much left them alone. It was a good environment to work in, because a small group of talented people could do things without a huge amount of planning. Things could take a lot longer than intended – in this case, years longer – but the results were some really good games."

The proof is indeed in the playing. *GoldenEye* redefined the console FPS, sold over eight million copies worldwide and invariably features in the top tens of those 'Greatest Game Ever' lists. Many of Steve's contributions over the project's 18-month duration drew on his low level coding skills. He worked on textures, explosions and the pioneering use of virtual memory on a console – a technique previously confined to PCs – which swapped code in and out of memory and effectively doubled the N64's capacity. Yet it was almost an afterthought that was to become his greatest triumph.

"FOR GOLDENEYE, I TRAWLED THROUGH THE CODE FOR ANYTHING THAT ASSUMED IT WAS SINGLE PLAYER AND CHANGED IT TO MULTI-PLAYER" STEVE ELLIS

"*GoldenEye* came out in August 1997 and up until April of that year it was just a single-player game. We'd talked about whether a multi-player mode was possible – we'd seen pre-release code of *Mario Kart 64* which must have been an inspiration and of course the console had four joypad ports – but no work had been done. Basically, I sat in a room and trawled through the code for anything that assumed it was single-player and changed it to work for four-player split screen. It was an arduous job but I managed it. It was obviously a feature worth having."

That's something of an understatement. *GoldenEye* undoubtedly pushed the genre forward in terms of narrative and enemy AI, but it was the guilty pleasure of performing headshots on your mates that kept players coming back to the title for months, even years. Understandably, Rare wanted more of the same…

"Tim Stamper said, 'Can we have another one, please?' There was talk of another *Bond* game and we did all spend a day on the set of *Tomorrow Never Dies*, but someone from management said no. We'd enjoyed the *Bond* thing – it was restrictive, but that can make you focus on what you're trying to do, which is no bad thing. Then it was decided we were going to work on something original with a female lead, and I thought that sounded interesting."

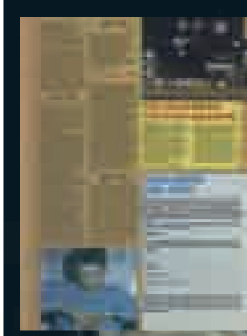
That lead was to be Joanna Dark and the *GoldenEye* gang got straight on to developing *Perfect Dark*. Steve continued to work his low level magic on the game engine, and made valuable headway in creating motion blur, which made the final version, and a torch effect, which didn't. He didn't stay to see the game released in 2000 though, as in 1999 he was tempted to break away from Rare and join the core of the original *GoldenEye* team who had elected to go it alone. So, was his departure due to a desire for a challenge, or did his former colleagues have pictures of him with farm animals?

Steve chokes on his éclair. "We just thought we could do better on our own," he assures me, "or at least better for ourselves. We got decent bonuses for *GoldenEye* but other people got a lot more. Rare had left us alone to develop the game and perhaps we naively thought they hadn't helped us much. At the time we didn't appreciate all the stuff they were doing in the background – protecting us from Nintendo and the *Bond* people. We just wanted control to make the game we wanted to do and get the rewards."

The famous five – David Doak, Karl Hilton, Graeme Norgate, Lee Ray and Steve – originally planned to work on an ambitious FPS title called *Redemption*, which was to feature the kind of psychic powers eventually seen in *Second Sight*. However, when the launch of the PS2 slipped into 2000, they

CRASH SMASH

Not content with furnishing Crash magazine with handy Spectrum cheats, Steve actually appeared in the hallowed pages of issue 54. "I did the Crash Challenge where you play the reviewers. I played Nick Roberts at *Cybernoid*. I lost 3-0, but I still got a £40 software voucher, which was a lot at the time. I used it to buy the games Crash wanted cheats for and spent my time hacking them and then sent them in."
Steve might have been gracious in defeat, but if you have that particular issue (or else Mort's excellent scan DVD containing them all), it's worth turning to page 58. You'll not only smile at a fresh-faced young Ellis, you'll see a rather smug Nick relishing in the fact he's crushed the hopes and dreams of a 14-year-old in front of friends and family. Mrs Roberts must be so proud.



» A defeated Steve takes it out on the packaging…

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

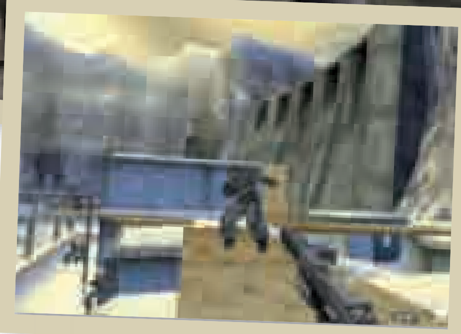
WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



» *GoldenEye* boasted some mightily impressive Bunsen burners.



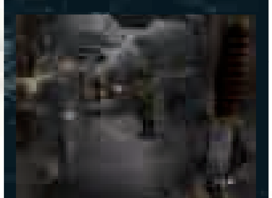
» **Above:** *Second Sight* had plenty of FRD's trademark visual trickery.



» The Dam level from *TS2* owed much to its *GoldenEye* heritage.

HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES

With such an impressive track record of producing first-person shooters, we asked Steve to give us his definitive guide to getting it right.
"Controls: so many games get it wrong and aren't fun because of that. We spend ages tweaking numbers that affect how the controls work – turn speeds, reload times, the way the camera moves, inertia. Individually they seem small, but they can make a big difference. Frame-rate: from day one at FRD, we were going for 60 frames per second. Even if you have to compromise elsewhere, it makes a game so much more playable.
Testing: you can't underestimate its importance. The reason *GoldenEye* ended up so well balanced is that we spent so long playing it instead of making it! And after an hour playing, you'd have a list of what to do to make it better for the next day.
And you have to have fun multi-player, of course."



» FPS games are not just about big guns. Knives are good too.

agreed to change tack and focussed on developing the first *TimeSplitters* game. After a frantic year of extraordinary effort, the first release from small start-up Free Radical Design proudly took its place amongst the new console's launch line-up. At a cost.

"Erm, I ended up getting divorced as a result," Steve acknowledges. "Yeah, you could say it was a busy year. But we had a fun multi-player game that ran really fast. The single-player game was added on really. I mean, not everyone has friends."

travelling concept also allowed the team free reign in their level design, though not all ideas made the final games…

"For *TimeSplitters 2*, we wanted to have an assault on the World Trade Centre. We thought shooting across between the Twin Towers would really work. Then 9/11 happened. Suddenly it didn't seem like such a good idea…"

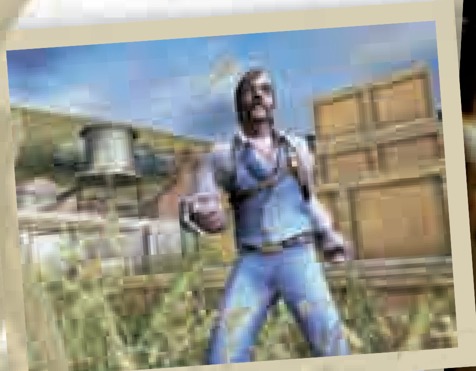
"FOR TIMESPLITTERS 2, WE WANTED TO HAVE AN ASSAULT ON THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE. AFTER 9/11, THAT SUDDENLY DIDN'T SEEM LIKE SUCH A GOOD IDEA" STEVE ELLIS

Having established the *TimeSplitters* brand and proven that they knew a thing or two about making shooters, the company spent subsequent years refining the series. 2002's sequel and last year's *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* built on the solid foundations of a slick game engine and superlative multi-player modes and added strong storylines and a refreshing dose of humour. The time

As FRD grew, branching out and releasing *Second Sight* in 2004 and now working on *Haze* for PS3 and an unannounced title for LucasArts, Steve's role inevitably became more managerial. He kept his coding fingers busy though by producing a handful of mini-games scattered through *TimeSplitters 2*, including Anaconda, a take on Snake, and a tribute to *Lunar Lander*. So those retro sensibilities are still very

much alive, Steve? "To be honest, I'd love to make 8-bit games," he confesses. "I always wanted to remake *Jet Set Willy* on the Amiga. In fact, I've spent the weekend trying to write a Spectrum emulator in 1000 lines. I've got it down to 1088. Nearly there. Something has been lost as technology progresses. These days, it's far harder for users to get started, just to get something on screen. I've got a son now and when I try to get him started on programming, I'm going to give him a Spectrum and say, 'There's your book – read that and learn how to use it!' I don't know what'll happen."

Whilst Retro Gamer predicts Ellis Jr's first program will be 10 Print 'Dad, why do you hate me?' 20 Goto 10, you've still got to love the sentiment…



» The swinging Harry Tipper from *Future Perfect* – good with guns and girls' clothes.



» Heather Mills, as she appeared in the first *TimeSplitters*.



» Some levels in *Future Perfect* clearly drew on Nottingham nightlife.



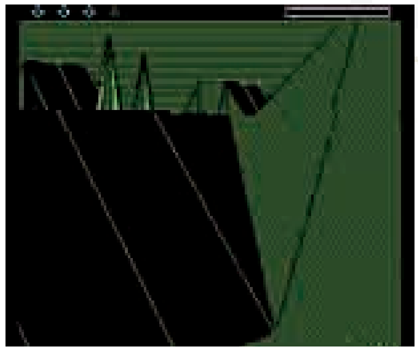
STEVE ELLIS DESERT ISLAND DISKS



JET SET WILLY

(ZX SPECTRUM)

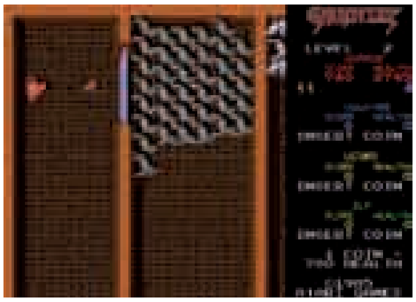
1 At the time this game seemed huge – 60 rooms on the ZX Spectrum. I never completed it, despite many hours trying. Rumours are that completion isn't even possible. Interestingly, *JSW* is also one of the first games ever to spawn a mod community – people created *Jet Set Willy* Editors and then used them to create their own mansions.



THE SENTINEL

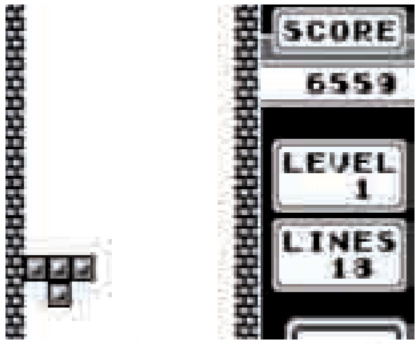
(ZX SPECTRUM)

2 An interesting puzzle game that is still playable today. Way ahead of its time – a solid 3D game on the ZX Spectrum. Re-released on PC in 1998.



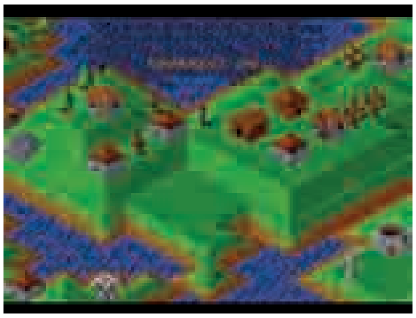
GAUNTLET ARCADE

3 This is probably the first four-player game I ever played. Infinitely playable and surprisingly well balanced. Insert more money to top up your ever-decreasing health. Genius.



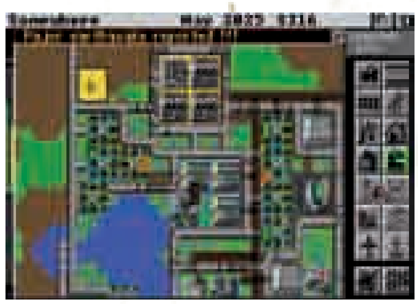
TERIS (NINTENDO GAMEBOY)

4 Probably the most well known game ever. Infinitely replayable. Who didn't spend hours playing this?



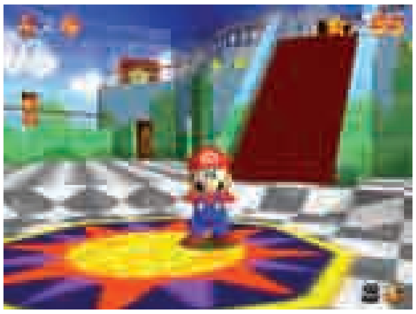
POPULOUS (AMIGA)

5 The beginning of a genre – the God game. Introduced many never-seen-before concepts to games, most of which are still in use today.



SIM CITY (AMIGA)

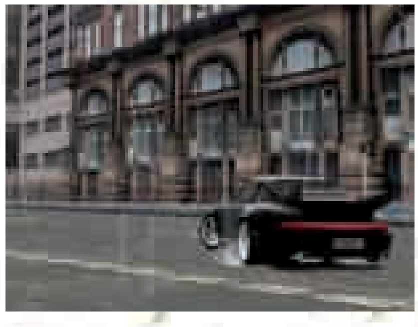
6 The beginning of another genre – the Sim game. I spent many hours trying to work out the optimal city design. Conclusion: I don't know. Maybe I should go to try again. Ruined once I found out that you could get more money for free by typing FUNDS.



SUPER MARIO 64

(NINTENDO 64)

7 Revolutionary. Probably the most successful conversion of a game from 2D to 3D. Well executed from start to finish.



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2 (XBOX)

8 The game I've spent most time playing in the past 3 to 4 years. A well-tuned difficulty curve gave a rewarding experience to patient players. Led the way with online integration – one of the first games that showed you where you ranked in the world for every event.



MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

"WHO'S BAD?"



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+



HISTORY

Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker* was not a good film. In fact, it's probably one of the worst movies we've ever seen, and we'd rather melt our eyeballs with hot pokers then have to ever sit through it again. Yes, it had great music (if you like listening to the king of pop that is) but the movie itself was nothing more than a glorified vanity project for someone, who at that point in time was arguably the world's biggest star. So it comes as somewhat of a surprise to find that even though the film itself is a complete and utter turd, the actual Mega Drive outing turned out to be pretty good fun.

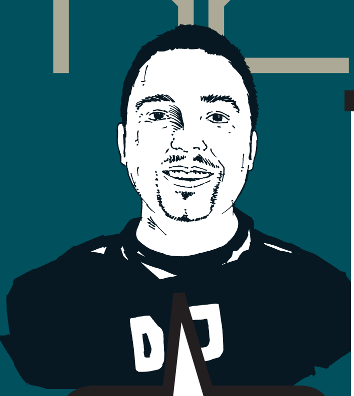
Each level required Jackson to hunt around the multi-tiered stages in search of missing children who had been kidnapped by the notorious Mr Big. Upon finding the necessary number of missing children, Bubbles the chimp would appear – no really – leap onto Jackson's shoulder and point him in the direction of the level's exit.

Before he could leave however, Mr Big appeared, and after mocking the moonwalker's futile efforts to capture him, would then send a load of bad guys for Jackson to deal with. What followed was easily the highlight of the game, and even now, some 16 years on, it never gets old.

Obviously not wanting his adoring public seeing him resort to fisticuffs, Michael Jackson used the power of magic to defeat his many enemies. Holding down the relevant button for a few seconds would release his hat, which would fly out boomerang fashion, destroying anyone it comes into contact with. Resist the urge to let fly with your trilby of doom however and Michael (and everyone else on-screen) launched into a stunning dance routine that culminated with the destruction of the rest of Jackson's temporary dance troupe. And if you thought seeing a group of humans go through the motions of Smooth Criminal was funny, wait until you see what the zombies and dogs on later levels get up to. Aaooow!



RETRORATED



As Microsoft's 360 continues to hit its stride more and more games are being released on its excellent Xbox Live Arcade service. Our favourite part of the service remains the coin-op section. Join us as we take a look at some of the more recently released arcade hits.

PAC-MAN

INFORMATION

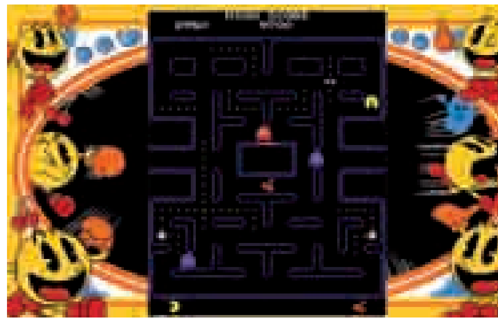
» **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO

» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

We really want to love *Pac-Man* and give it a really high score, but we can't, we just can't. It may be a flawless replication of the 1980 classic, but this 360 release falls way short of the original arcade hit and it's all down to the 360's controller.

While it's perfect for tearing through the streets of *Project Gotham Racing 3*, or making devilishly tricky headshots in *Quake IV*, it simply isn't up to playing a good old-fashioned game of *Pac-Man*. For some reason, everyone's favourite pill muncher is really fiddly to control, and it's all too easy to shoot past a turn you want to make and barrel straight into a ghost. It's almost as if the game has actually been programmed to pick up diagonals or something instead of just having four-way controls – it's just a real effort to play. A shame, as the online leaderboards are just begging for highscore input. Die-hard fans will still download it anyway, but be prepared for a lot of frustration.

OVERALL **64%**



» What are you doing? Just eat the damn ghosts already

STREET FIGHTER II HYPER FIGHTIN'

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** SENSORY SWEEP

» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 800

It's taken a bloody age to arrive, but after numerous delays Capcom's most famous beat-'em-up finally arrives, slightly bruised, a little battered, but definitely not beaten. It's already the most downloaded game on the service and a quick play reveals that the seminal fighter has lost none of its charm.

Okay, so lag can rear its annoying head (although it's far more stable now) and it can be mighty tricky to pull off certain special moves – *DOA4* arcade stick for the win – but this is otherwise one of most enjoyable games on Microsoft's service and definitely one of the best arcade games that's currently available. It's not quite arcade perfect (there's some tiny loads at the end of every match) but otherwise this is as close as you'll get to playing arcade *Street Fighter II* without having to resort to emulation or owning the real deal. Throw in an excellent 'winner stays on' option and the ability to watch certain games while they're being played and you can almost forgive Capcom for the length delays. Almost…

OVERALL **84%**



» Sagat discovered that fighting Blanka was a shocking experience (that's enough of that – Ed)

FROGGER

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ECLIPSE

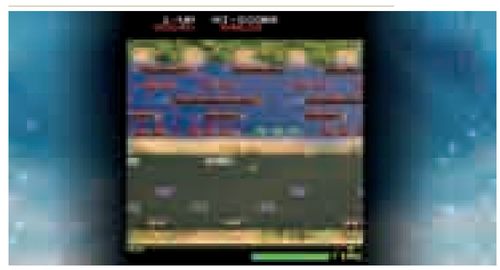
» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

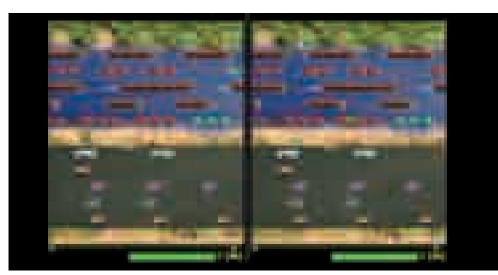
***Frogger* was the first Konami title to appear on Xbox Live, and while it's not without a few issues, it's actually pretty damned good.**

Unlike *Pac-Man*, the controls seem far more responsive and we seldom died because of a misplaced D-Pad press. It also features an enhanced version of the game which boasts both improved visuals – and very nice they look too – and audio.

In fact, the only misgivings we have about *Frogger* is that the original music doesn't quite sound right, and there's sometimes a bit of slowdown in the top right hand of the screen – other than that *Frogger* is well worth a download.

OVERALL **76%**





» While the multi-player options are a welcome addition they can often suffer from an annoying amount of lag

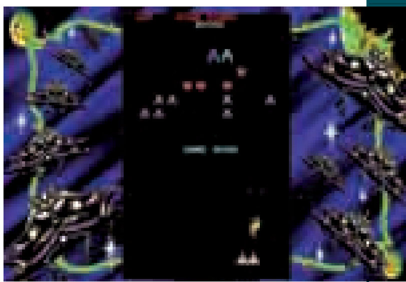
GALAGA

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

Good old Namco. It's released hundreds of arcades games over the years and what do we get on Xbox Live Arcade? Bloody *Pac-Man* and *Galaga* – two games that have seen more action than super-rich Darran's estate agent.

Luckily, *Galaga* displays none of the control issues that are present in *Pac-Man* (although to be fair, you only have to steer left and right and don't have to make precise turns) and while it's obviously beginning to show its age, it still remains a resoundingly solid little blaster. Like *Pac-Man* there are no enhancements other than a hi-res bevel and an online scoreboard, but it could be argued that the original game was so good, there's no reason to change it. Of course, anyone who has played the like of *Galaga '88* will know that's not strictly true, but it's a nice change of pace to all the *Robotron*-styled shooters that are currently available.



» Okay, we admit it, we're rubbish…

OVERALL 73%

CRYSTAL QUEST

INFORMATION

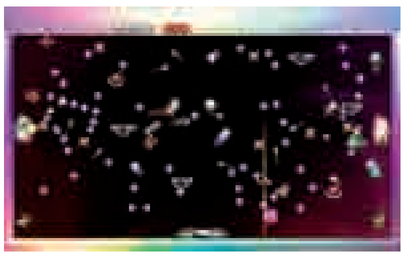
» **DEVELOPER:** STAINLESS GAMES
» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

Although not strictly an arcade game, *Crystal Quest* shares many similarities with the likes of *Robotron: 2084* and *Smash TV*.

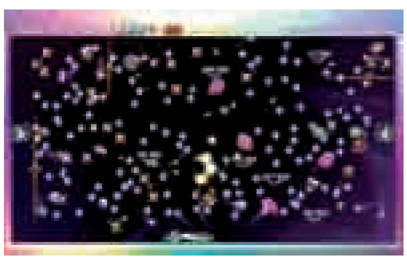
Sadly, unlike the aforementioned games, *Crystal Quest* isn't actually all that fun to play. In fact, it's probably one of the most monotonous experiences Xbox Live can offer (yes, we'd rather watch a download bar fill up).

Despite our love of *Robotron: 2084*, there are far too many games on Xbox Live Arcade that feature the classic 'one stick to shoot, one stick to fire' control set-up, so there's not really any space for one that isn't very good. Zooming around the screen collecting crystals, whilst avoiding enemies may sound like fun, but the reality couldn't be further from the truth. Avoid.

OVERALL 46%



» This may look exciting, but believe us, it's about as riveting as counting sheep



» While the game heats up on the later levels, you'll make no effort to get there

TIME PILOT

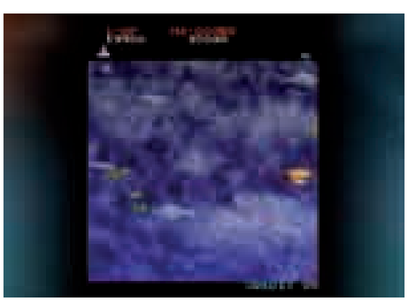
INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ECLIPSE
» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

We're huge fans of shmups at Retro Gamer, so when we heard that Digital Eclipse would be working on the conversion of *Time Pilot* we became as excited as a very excited person.

Now the game is with us we're pleased to announce that not only is it as good as we were hoping for, it also happens to have one of the best graphical updates we've seen on Microsoft's new service. As for the gameplay? Well it's classic *Time Pilot*. Shoot down a set amount of enemies, take out the boss, then move on to a newer, more technically advanced level before you run out of lives. Great controls, slick visuals and music that's bouncier than Anna Nicole Smith's chest means that *Time Pilot* is another great game to add to your arcade library.

OVERALL 83%





» Yes it looks simple, but it's surprisingly good fun to play

SCRAMBLE

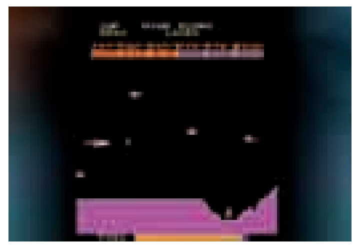
INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ECLIPSE
» **MARKET POINTS COST:** 400

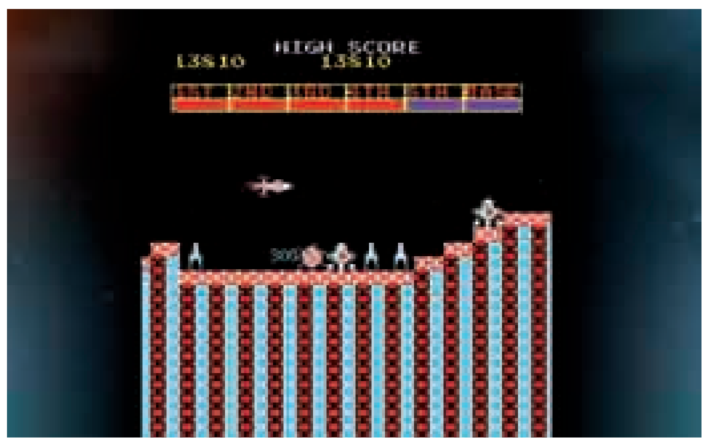
Digital Eclipse's third Konami conversion is the classic *Scramble*, and by now you should know exactly what to expect. It's another solid conversion that's bound to send fans of the original game into a rabid frenzy of excitement.

Scramble has always been a great little shooter, and the balance between scoring as many points as possible, while managing your constantly depleting fuel still works like a charm. The risk and reward gameplay of sticking as close to the surface in order to take out fuel tanks and missiles without clipping the ground still manages to excite and the updated visuals and music greatly enhance the experience. With Konami's first three games proving to be so enjoyable, we're greatly looking forward to seeing how the likes of *Contra*, *Track & Field* and *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* turn out.

OVERALL 86%



» This is easily *Scramble's* most frustrating level



» The enhanced version looks lovely, but we constantly find ourselves returning to the coin-op original

» YOU CAN'T TELL THE TIME WITH IT

GAME & WATCH COLLECTION

WHEN YOU'RE BIG IN JAPAN





- » **SYSTEM:** NDS
- » **PRICE:** 500 NINTENDO CLUB POINTS (JAPAN)
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



Don't you wish you lived in Japan? Efficient public transport, clean cities and hospitals, delicious food, polite people, beautiful wom... (snip! You've only got 300 words, shut up about Japan being brilliant! – ed). Plus, if you live in Japan you can take advantage of some great Nintendo Club deals. In the UK our STARS catalogue features boring and pointless PC wallpaper to "buy", but in the lands to the East they are blessed with rare games, such as this Game & Watch Collection. Lucky scamps.

The only way to get G&WC in the UK is to pay importers who've used their Club points to acquire it. You're looking at about £40 plus postage, or a trash bag full of ducklings if you can find the right shady madman – we paid the £40. What you get is three pixel-perfect recreations of the dual-screened LCD Game & Watch handhelds *Oil Panic*, *Donkey Kong*, and *Green House*. Though there are only three titles here, they proved highly enjoyable in short bursts. Despite their simplicity the games are fun, but this shouldn't be regarded as or compared against retail releases. For those in the UK it's only worth purchasing for collection purposes.

But that's not why we're covering it. G&WC is featured on these pages because it's not only an amazing historical item which preserves the nature of these three games and makes them accessible to everyone (in terms of DS hardware), but it signifies a great opportunity which Nintendo would be crazy to not capitalise on: I am of course referring to the possibility of every G&W handheld (over 50) being perfectly recreated (especially the dual-screen games which are perfect for the DS), and then sold for under £30 as a mainstream release. There is no other way (apart from buying original hardware) to play dual-screen classics like *Bomb Sweeper*, *Pinball* or *Zelda*.

Such a package would offer perfect quick-go thrills, coupled with the need to constantly beat your or other people's high scores. It would not only secure this piece of gaming history forever, since most original systems are degrading, but it would give access to everyone. G&W handhelds can command extortionate prices on eBay, and so the time is ripe for such a release. They could even include a mini history section, explaining the origins of each title. Plus of course, only the DS would be able to do this real justice. We want this and we want it now, Nintendo. In your own time…



OPINION

Let's be honest, this is more of a collector's item than a full game. There's very little actual gameplay to be had here but if it's a comforting feeling of nostalgia that you're after or if you just want to feel smug about owning the rarest DS game available, then *Game & Watch Collection* is for you.

Ashley Day



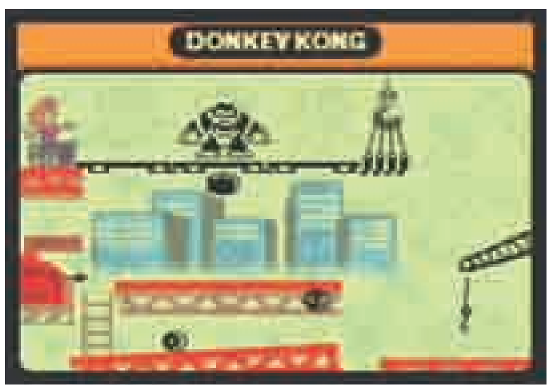


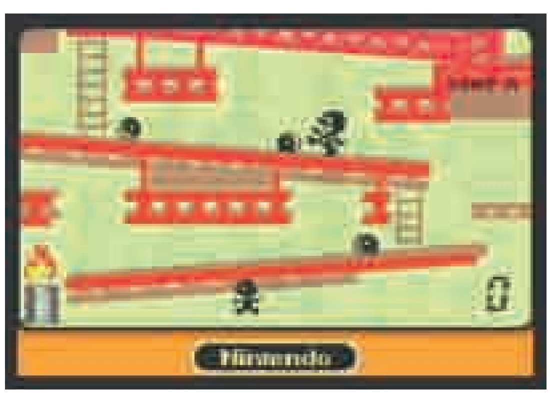
» Quick reflexes are needed in *Green House*, as you try to chemically exterminate slugs and spiders..





» *Oil Panic* is tense, and requires astute usage of both the top and lower screens.





» Technically the most advanced game, *Donkey Kong* is an interesting twist on the original arcade game.

IN SUMMARY

Could this possibly be a dry run for a more packed future release? We sincerely hope so, because some might say, it would be awesome.

RATING **N/A**

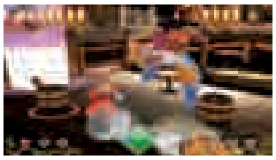


OPINION

Ah, this takes me back to the good old days, when I was but a lad. It is pricey but then again it's given away free in Japan (if you have the points), so a right bargain then. It's tense too, a bit like dancing, and I can foresee myself really getting into a fuller compilation, should one ever get released.

Simon Phillips

POWERFUL WHEN STONED



- » **SYSTEM:** PSP
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **RELEASED:** 13 OCTOBER
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



Capcom has performed another retro slam-dunk and is fast becoming our favourite developer; few companies are as generous when it comes to back-catalogues. Let's recap: the excellent and voluptuously laden *Capcom Classics Collections,* the four game *Street Fighter Alpha Anthology* pack, and we best not forget last month's *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* update. It clearly has an understanding of how to cater to classic gamers without being cynical and simply vying for our money. Dare we say it? A corporation trying to profit by giving consumers quality products and value for money – capitalism might not be so bad after all!

Power Stone Collection brings together two of the Dreamcast's finest brawlers, and contains much painstaking attention to detail – you can't help but feel it was put together by people who care. Both games have several screen settings available, including an optimised widescreen mode for easier viewing. They've managed to cram both in without perceptibly cutting things down and the games, with fully traversable 3D environments, still impress. Capcom has even taken the trouble to include the Dreamcast VMU mini-games (like Falcon's Aerial Adventure), making them unlockable extras. There's also multi-player download, allowing four people to simultaneously brawl using just one UMD! The minimal network lag is acceptable, though the frenetic action can sometimes be disorienting.

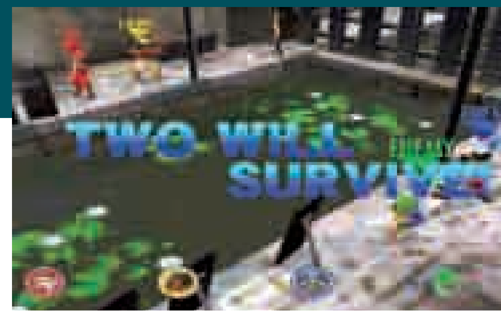
So it's an almost perfect port of the originals, but what of these original games if you've never played them before? Relentless, madcap, and wonderfully deranged nothing-held-back fully-3D brawling. On steroids. The frenetic intensity of the fighting makes it a perfect multi-player party game, and also enjoyable solo – but this is also its main flaw. The emphasis of *PSC* is very much on carefree fun, meaning fanatical beat-'em-up experts might be put off by the lack of rigid rules. There are no lengthy move-sets to learn and it's instantly accessible; as such it lacks the complexity of more refined beat-'em-ups. But who cares? The thing is we're still playing the Dreamcast originals, making this essential.



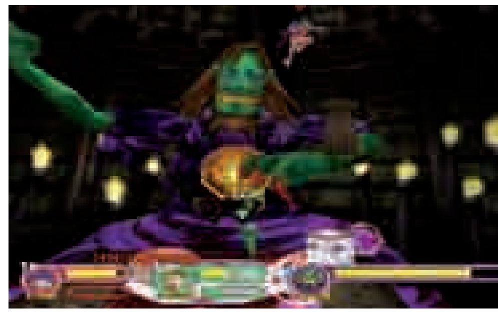
OPINION

The original *Power Stone* games were criminally ignored when first released, but now all you sinners have been given a second chance with this nigh-on perfect pair of conversions. The first (and best) game plays especially well on the PSP's luxurious screen and both games run at a terrific speed over a wi-fi connection. Pick up this great collection and redeem yourselves before it's too late.

Ashley Day



» Is there anything (involving being clothed) which is more fun than a furious four-player rumble match? Possibly not.



» All of the levels are suitably unique in their design, while being fully traversable and interactive.



» Under the mini arcade section you can play the Dreamcast VMU games – a sign of genuine care being taken.



» A giant dragon versus some kind of kabuki girl. It's the kind of madness dreams are made from.



» Collect three "Power Stones" and you can perform grossly over-the-top and exaggerated moves such as this. Wonderful.



» Multi-hit combos are the staple of any good beat-'em-up, although it lacks the steep learning curve of them.



» We have to admit to preferring the second game, mainly due to it supporting four players. Ashley still prefers the first though. He is of course wrong…

IN SUMMARY

Portable and oh-so-good in multi-player. You honestly can't complain about two gloriously insane fighting games, of current-gen quality, for the price of one.

RATING **90%**



OPINION

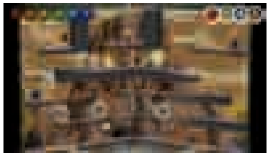
Okay, so there are only two games on offer, but my, what games they are. Capcom have crammed two huge games onto one beautifully presented UMD and the end result is another stunning update. In fact, the only problem I've personally found is that it can be hard to work out what's going on in *Power Stone 2*'s frantic multi-player, but that's probably because my eyes are buggered. Beat-'em-up fans are going to love it. Now let's have a sequel eh?

Darran Jones

» A BURST OPPORTUNITY WHICH LEAVES A SOAPY TASTE

BUBBLE BOBBLE EVOLUTION

STILL IN THE PRIMATE STAGE



» The levels look absolutely gorgeous, but are unfortunately too long for their own good.

- **SYSTEM:** PSP
- **PRICE:** £34.99
- **RELEASED:** 29 SEPTEMBER
- **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** IMARVELOUS INTERACTIVE / DIGITAL WHIP
- **PLAYERS:** 1 –4

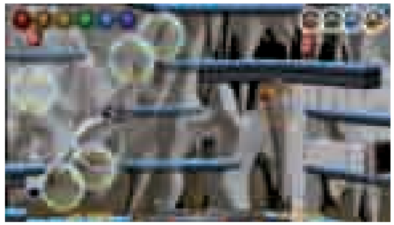


After reading Stuart Campbell's definitive article, seeing previews, and reading the manual, I was excited to get hold of the latest Bub and Bob adventure. It has the brothers placed in two separate towers, each floor of which has three interconnected rooms. The aim is to reach the tower's summit by solving puzzles and defeating bosses, thereby activating elevators. It all seems perfect. Unfortunately, extended play reveals it to be a confusing and frustrating experience.

The main problem with *Bubble Bobble Evolution* is sloppy design which artificially extends length. Progress requires solving puzzles which are abstract and convoluted; real world logic seldom applies, and it degenerates into trial and error. Puzzles mostly involve trapping a key item (such as electricity) in a bubble and painstakingly navigating it through the rooms by altering air currents (not as easy as it sounds). Plus, don't forget to avoid enemies which constantly respawn, manually open every door you pass through, and keep tabs on each room's temperature, air pressure, and gravity. The concept is clever but the implementation poor and overly complicated, resulting in many failed attempts, a lot of backtracking, and much head scratching.

Later levels require the same laborious actions, while also navigating two or more floors. Walls of ice need melting on one floor while an enemy generator has to be shut down on another, with three floors then requiring enemy elimination. Worse still, sometimes this needs to be done in conjunction with the other tower. Dual mechanics are brilliant in theory (*Head Over Heels* and recently *Resident Evil Zero* showing it can be fun), but the execution here is lacking, making it more work than it should be.

It's a crying shame, and Retro Gamer forced itself to keep playing for many days in the hope of seeing the game elevate itself above being merely average, but while *Bubble Bobble Evolution* had great potential combined with super-slick production values, the cheap and grueling level design is likely going to be too much for most to put up with.



» Every door requires using a nearby switch – an unnecessary element that further slows down gameplay.





OPINION

Yes it's very cute to look at and you can blow bubbles (albeit with a magic horn) but that's where the similarities to *Bubble Bobble* end. The overly long puzzles and arduous boss fights do seem to be complicated for the sake of it, but there is fun to be found (in small doses). It's a huge leap up from the so-so *Bubble Bobble Revolution* but it's still nothing more than an above average game.

Darran Jones



OPINION

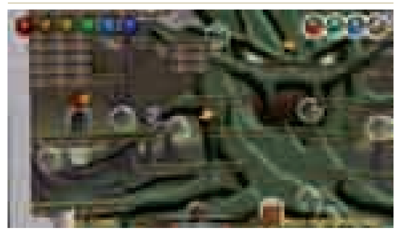
While Marvelous Interactive should be commended for trying to take *Bubble Bobble* in a bold new direction, it's difficult to know who *Evolution* is actually aimed at. The lazy level design, convoluted puzzles and stiff controls are bound to annoy the more casual gamer, while fans of the original will wonder why they just couldn't have an enhanced graphical update of the original game. Worth a look by all means but by no way essential.

Simon Phillips

IN SUMMARY

Arduous to play – like hopscotch blindfolded, in a pool, and with pockets full of rocks.

RATING **62%**



» Enemies constantly respawn, which is very annoying when you have to keep switching rooms.

WHERE'S BUBBLE BOBBLE?



- **SYSTEM:** PSP
- **PRICE:** £19.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** XPLOSIV
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **FEATURED GAMES:** SPACE INVADERS, SPACE INVADERS PART 2, THE NEW ZEALAND STORY, PHOENIX, ALPINE SKI, ELEVATOR ACTION, CRAZY BALLOON, CHACK N' POP, LUNAR RESCUE, BALLOON BOMBER, LEGEND OF KAGE, THE FAIRYLAND STORY, RASTAN SAGA, RAIMAIS, CAMELTRY, QIX, KIKI KAIKAI, KURI KINTON, RETURN OF THE INVADERS, SPACE DUNGEON, SPACE CHASER, BALLOON BOMBER ENHANCED, CAMELTRY ENHANCED, CRAZY BALLOON ENHANCED, LEGEND OF KAGE ENHANCED



Xplosiv set the industry standard with its excellent *Taito Legends* compilations. By offering beautifully presented disks that were bursting with classic gaming goodness, it quickly set a new benchmark for all future compilations.

Sadly, while *Taito Legends 2* is still without equal, Xplosiv's first PSP compilation doesn't quite manage to impress in the same way – mainly because Capcom has already beaten Xplosiv to the proverbial punch.

More on that later though. For now, let's take a look at the actual compilation itself. The first thing you'll probably be wondering is where all the classic titles from the home console compilations are hiding. *Bubble Bobble, Rainbow Islands, Zoo Keeper, Operation Wolf, Elevator Action Returns, Cleopatra Fortune, Liquid Kids* and *Don Doko Don* are all noticeably absent. Instead we're treated to hits such as *Phoenix, Rastan, The New Zealand Story, Qix* and *Space Invaders*, great games we're sure you'll agree, but the addition of any of the above games would have made for an unbeatable compilation. As for the actual games themselves?



OPINION

Can you criticise Taito for playing it boringly safe? There is nothing technically wrong with this compilation, and arguably it should score highly. But after seeing how much effort went into *Capcom Classics Collection Remixed* on PSP, this suddenly doesn't seem so impressive. While *CCCR* gave you reasons to stick with even boring games (the bonus releasing objectives being ingenious), this feels somewhat flat.

John Szczepaniak



» Bulging biceps, full emulation and a fire-spewing sword, what more could you ask for?

Well, they're all pretty much arcade perfect – we certainly couldn't see any differences – and come with a variety of viewing modes (including a handy TATE option for the vertical games) and options that are bound to please the more discerning gamer. The presentation throughout is also top notch, and at only £19.99, *Taito Legends Power-Up* represents exceptional value for money. Hell, there are even four new updated games that feature sparkling new aesthetics.

As good as Xplosiv's compilation is though, it just can't compete with Capcom's superior *Classics Collection Remixed*, and that's not just because *Remixed* features *Strider* on it…

While *Taito Legends* contains some superb hits from yesteryear, the ratio of great to poor titles is nowhere near as strong as Capcom's compilation and the exclusion of sure fire hits such as *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* cynically suggests that Xplosiv is holding the best back for a second compilation in the not too distant future. So Capcom takes round one of the PSP compilation bout, let's see if Xplosiv comes out fighting when the expected sequel arrives.



» The inclusion of TATE modes for the many vertical games will greatly please the more hardcore gamer out there

IN SUMMARY

Safe, is probably the best way to describe *Taito Legends Power-Up*. It does everything it's supposed to do and very well at that. It's just that Capcom has already done it a whole lot better.

RATING **82%**



» Simple to look at, but oh so beautiful to play, *Qix* is one of *Power-Up*'s gems



OPINION

A Taito compilation with no *Bubble Bobble* or *Rainbow Islands*? Unforgivable in this day and age! Moans aside, *Taito Power-Up* is a solid selection of games. The updates are nice (if rather pointless) and the price is great, but it's going to take more than three different versions of *Space Invaders* to impress us..

Simon Phillips



» Saving kiwis on the move has never been so much fun



» Okay, so it's not exactly *Elevator Action Returns*, but this is still pretty good fun

BARGAIN HUNT

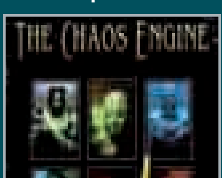
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

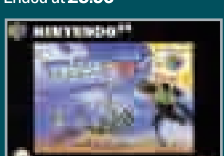
THE CHAOS ENGINE
AMIGA
Normally sells for **£5+**
Ended at **56 pence**



STREETS OF RAGE 2
Normally sells for **£7+**
Ended at **16.31**



PILOTWINGS 64
NINTENDO 64
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£3.96**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



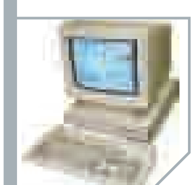
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

ACORN



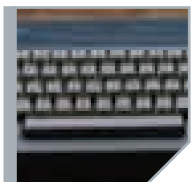
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**

Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

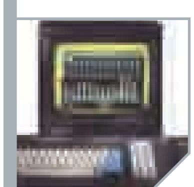
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**

Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**

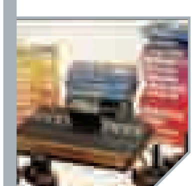
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**

Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT (6)
- HEN'S TEETH (5)
- LUCKY FIND (4)
- EBAY REGULAR (3)
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN (1)

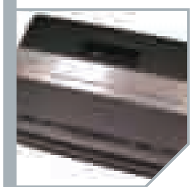


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY (5)
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY (4)
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

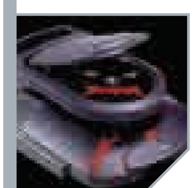


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY (3)
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY (5)
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY (4)
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



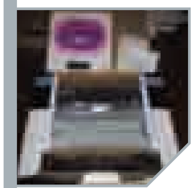
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY (3)
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**

Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY (6)
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**

Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY (6)
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY (6)
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



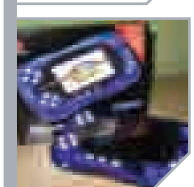
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY (4)
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY (3)
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY (3)
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY (2)
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

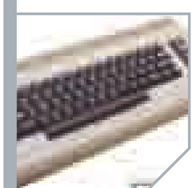


C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY (4)
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**

The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY (1)
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY (5)
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY (4)
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

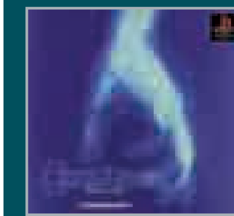


CDTV

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY (5)
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

EINHANDER
PLAYSTATION
Normally sells for **£18+**
Ended at **£31.51**



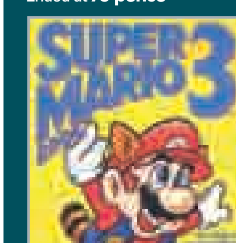
PSST!
SPECTRUM
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£1.15**



R-TYPE
MASTER SYSTEM
Normally sells for **£5+**
Ended at **£12.76**



SUPER MARIO BROS 3
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **75 pence**



ROAD RASH II
Normally Sells for **£3+**
Ended at **£9.52**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



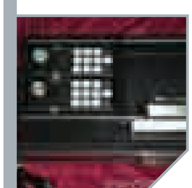
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
–Magnum Durex 3 pack
– Knave October '93 Issue
– Kleenex 3-Ply



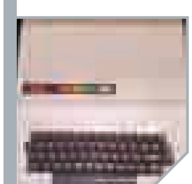
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



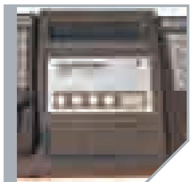
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



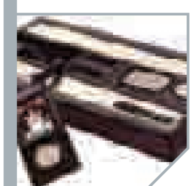
ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



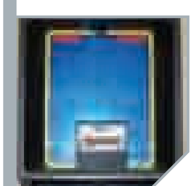
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.
- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



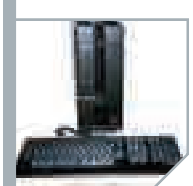
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

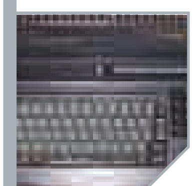
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER



MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



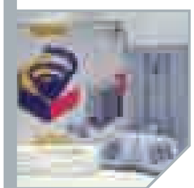
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



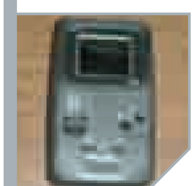
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



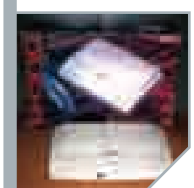
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



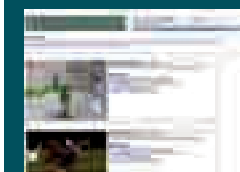
FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



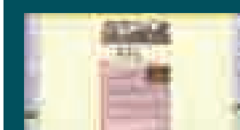
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

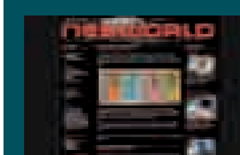
NINJATOE'S LEGEND OF ZELDA MODELS
Origami/paper craft is huge in Japan, so why not get in on the act and create your own paper *Zelda* characters? Don't be too surprised if your first effort doesn't look like they do on the website. Bending card is bloody hard. http://members.home.nl/saarloos/zeldamodels.htm



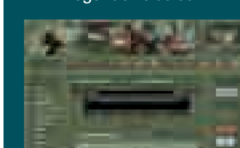
THE VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
If you're looking for screenshots, game endings, scans or game adverts then look no further than the Videogame Museum. There's loads of information to pore over and the presentation throughout is top notch. A great site for when you fancy wasting work time. http://www.vgmuseum.com

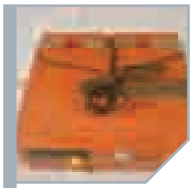


NES WORLD
NES World boasts reviews, a friendly chatroom and forum and plenty of articles and interviews (including a look at some of Nintendo's more famous lawsuits). Perfect for any gamer with an interest in Nintendo's console. www.Nesworld.com



LEGEND OF ZELDA.COM
We're huge fans of Link's adventures, so imagine how pleased we were when we stumbled across this. From an in-depth Hyrulian Timeline, to a cute dance that features jigging *Zelda* sprites, no stone has been left unturned: http://www.legendofzelda.com





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



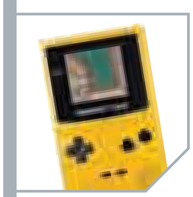
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



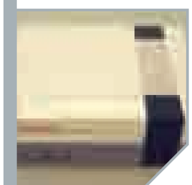
GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



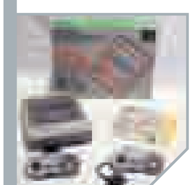
N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



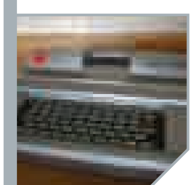
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



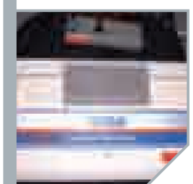
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



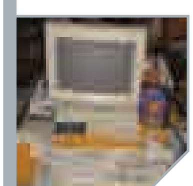
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

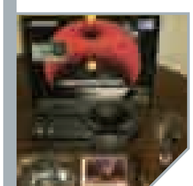


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

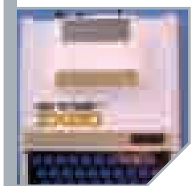
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR

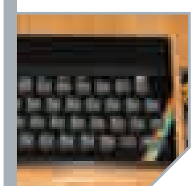


ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK

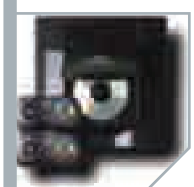


NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- WAKU WAKU 7

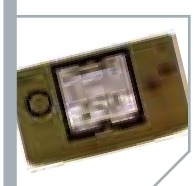


NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

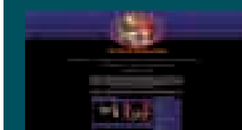


NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

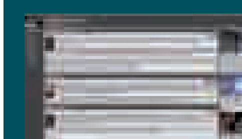
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

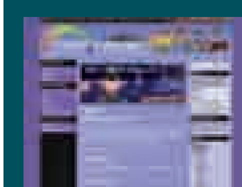
THE PHANTASY STAR PAGES
With a brand new *Phantasy Star* game on the way there's never been a better time to get yourself acquainted with the vastly underrated franchise. Fortunately, the people behind The Phantasy Star Pages live and breath the classic franchise and definitely know their Phacts (their word, not ours). The end result is a fantastic website that's well worthy of your time.
http://www.phantasy-star.net



LOST LEVELS
Ever wanted to know why *Thunder Force VI* was cancelled on the Dreamcast, or why *Final Fantasy II* never received a US translation? Then you need to take a trip to the excellent Lost Levels. Run by Frank Cifaldi, it's a fascinating website that specialises in digging up the dirt on unreleased games. Chances are, if a game's ever been rumoured for a release, you'll find out more information about it on this great site.
http://lostlevels.org/



RETROSPEC
With all the coverage Retro Gamer constantly gives to Retro Remakes, you'd be forgiven for thinking that no other remake sites actually exist. This, of course, is far from the case, so if you're looking for fresh remakes why not check out the superb Retrospec and download classics such as *Exolon*, *Head Over Heels* and *Jet Set Willy*?
http://retrospec.sgn.net



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

AN ODE TO NES

Dear Retro Gamer,

I first discovered your magazine in my local WH Smith, buried in the deepest, darkest regions of the "Computing" section, where only the Brave and Bold dare adventure. After spotting the two most sacred words ever (Super! Nintendo!) I was hooked.

Being an 18-year-old female, I am afraid I am one of a minority of individuals who would confess to being obsessed with the Atari, and dreaming of having Alex Kidd's babies.

So without further ado, I hereby dedicate this piece of literature to your good selves.

Enjoy!

Stacy Shendan

All I know is 1 2 3
I love you like my Atari
I got more scores than I can top
And never know when I should stop
You'll never have the TV off
I love you like my little box

1 2 3, my eyes are blessed
I opened them and saw my NES
Faulty insides, like a maze
But when I thump the front, it plays
My habits border on disgrace,
I love your pixilated face.

So all I know is 1 2 3
Those cartridges, they make me squee
Your resolution in my eyes
I love to watch your bosses die
Alex Kidd, please marry me.
I love you like my Atari!

Crikey! Another female reader, and another who loves Alex Kidd! Nothing wrong with that, our Sub Editor is also a huge fan and has been considering writing an article for some time. Thank you for your poem, and to show our appreciation, have a free T-shirt and Sega Radica pad. It doesn't have Alex Kidd, but we're sure you'll enjoy it.

IN A BIND

Dear Retro Gamer,

Firstly a huge thank you for continuing to provide an interesting and nostalgic read. There is always something I didn't know about in each and every issue.

I have noticed something over the past two issues though, and wondered if anyone else noticed it. For some reason the quality of the binding on your magazine seems to be 'not up to par'. The first few pages of these two issues have come away from the glue/spine very quickly. I always look after my magazines and books, and know how to read them without breaking the spine. Are you using a different printing firm, or have they changed the way they put the magazine together?

I am going to have to re-purchase these two issues, and if the next one is similar I will be a bit annoyed... Please keep the content to its very high standard and I shall continue to buy your great mag.

Regards,

Arthur Gill

PS: When oh when will you do a proper article on the Nintendo Virtual Boy?

Sorry to hear of your problems Arthur. As a dedicated team who keeps copies of each issue printed (there's a small RG shrine in the office actually), we can understand how annoying it is for them to come apart. Not everyone seems to have this problem though, with only a couple of people mentioning it on the forum. We were told this can happen on rare occasions as the glue nozzle becomes clogged at the printing factory – though they assure us it only affects a very small number of issues. It would seem your two issues were simply bad luck. We have taken measures though (involving a Cat o' nine tails) to try to ensure this stops happening. As for the Virtual Boy, funny you should mention it. Just the other day we were speaking to a potential new freelancer who is something of an expert on the subject. It's definitely on our "To Do" lists, so the eyes, keep them peeled! Not literally of course, that would create some nasty lawsuits.



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-Shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…



» Nintendo's Virtual Boy. A misunderstood gem, or the beginning of the end for its market supremacy? Expect a feature at some point in the future.

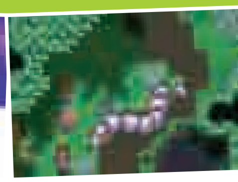
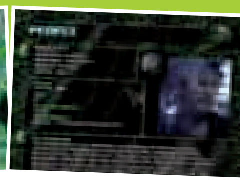
RETRO STYLINGS

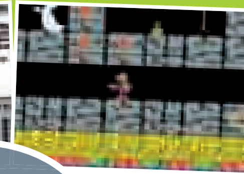
Hi Darran,

Just thought I'd start by saying that I have followed the magazine since Issue 2 (although I managed to get an Issue 1 eventually) and have every issue. The new resurrected issues are much better than the old ones and I haven't even missed the free discs.

I'm writing to let you know of an interesting item that recently went on eBay that isn't covered in your 'buyers guide'. It is a Shinco 868 DVD player with built in Sega Mega Drive! The item finished for the princely sum of £100. There was also a weird TV set with a built in Dreamcast (the TV looked like a space helmet).

Being a little bit sad, I'm sat here typing this wearing my 'old' Retro Gamer T-shirt (the 'Waggle My Joystick' one)





» The Shinco 868 DVD machine, which plays Mega Drive roms via special game CDs. We're not entirely sure if it's legal, but we sure do want one!

and my step-son has just asked me if he can borrow it to wear in a school play – they're doing the musical "Back To The Eighties" – I'll try and get some pictures of him wearing it on stage!

Anyhow, thanks for the mag and your time in reading this.

All the best for a bright (and Retro) future (now there's an oxymoron!).

Cheers!

Matt

Don't be so hard on yourself Matt. As we all sit here reading this letter we too are also all wearing Retro Gamer T-shirts! In fact, wearing them in the Retro Gamer office is mandatory (as is some form of flared trouser). Even writers from other magazines wear them (on one particular day, no fewer than six people in the building were wearing the blue SID chip one).

Also, thanks for mentioning those Mega Drive and Dreamcast models. We were aware of the DVD player with built in MD, but as pointed out in our Mega Drive Retroinspection (Issue 27 page 44) there are countless variations on the hardware.

In cases where there are multiple versions of the same machine, we try and cover only the main ones in the Buyers Guide. But it's still an interesting oddity! The Dreamcast you mention though, is the Divers CX-1 released in 2000. It also comes with a keyboard and webcam, making it highly desirable and therefore also very expensive. Many systems were integrated into other forms of hardware, so maybe a feature is needed?



» How could SCEA foolishly not want to release this in the West? Madness we say, utter madness!

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: IF YOU COULD PLAY ONE GAME THROUGH FOR THE FIRST TIME AGAIN WHCH WOULD IT BE?

ID: Duddyroar

Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night, without a shadow of a doubt. Playing it the first time around was a real joy and I envy anyone who has yet to experience it. *Legend Of Zelda: Link To The Past* on the SNES comes a very close second.

ID: Opa-Opa

Baldur's Gate for me, the first time you play through it has a great story but going back for seconds it becomes a bit text heavy... Would be great to be able to read it all for the first time again.

ID: Dudley

All of them, thanks to my crippling amnesia.

ID: kaiserpc

Can I pick two....? First one (obvious choice), *Final Fantasy VII* – I've played through it three or four times, but nothing beats the first time through. Plus you know all the cutscenes. Second one is *Privateer 2: The Darkening*. The only space sim I've played that is better than *Elite*. Anyway, I can't bring myself to play this again because I know the story. I can still see the end scene now.

ID: psj3809

Bruce Lee – such an easy game to complete, but the first time I ever played it I was amazed by the gameplay/screens and loved it.

ID: Smurph

I'd be inclined to go for a story led game such as *Secret Of Mana* or *Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, but instead what actually sticks in my mind is the immediate rush of playing *Pandemonium* on the PSOne for the first time. I nearly wet myself laughing because the play mechanics felt so fresh and fun at the time.

ID: revgiblet

Ico. I wasn't expecting a great deal the first time I played it, so was totally overwhelmed by what an emotional and awesome experience it is. I started playing it again but it wasn't the same without the sense of wonder at each new environment.

ID: Dudley

All of them, thanks to my crippling amnesia.

ID: khisanth

Oh definitely *Bard's Tale*! And I'd blank my mind to being back in the late Eighties so I could really enjoy it!

ID: sirclive1

Lords Of Midnight. I'm glad I've had 22 years of playing it, but I would love to do that game again for the first time.

ID: StarEye

I want to say *Secret Of Monkey Island* or *Monkey Island 2*, but those two games are just too short to waste an opportunity like this on. So I'll say *Final Fantasy VII* instead.

ID: Dark Reaper

Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time is a game I would happily forget in order to play it through again. It took over my life the first time I played it. I'd also love to be able to play *Resident Evil 2* without knowing what was coming next. Sometimes, pants-wetting terror is a good thing!

ID: Kickboxingshrimp

All of them, thanks to Dudly's crippling amnesia.

ID: GetDexter

Roland On The Ropes. Basically, I am going to give this answer for every single 'From The Forum' question until my dogged persistence gets my name in print.

ID: pottyboy

My choice would have to be *Another World* on the Amiga. I really want to get stuck and be frightened by that huge beast again, but I can't as I've completed it over 50+ times now and it's getting rather boring!

THE RETRO FORUM





» Any excuse to print images of our beloved *Symphony Of The Night*. Microsoft has made a wise choice putting it on XLA.

HAPPY HORROR

Hi Retro Gamer,

Firstly, loving Issue 29, which is the first I've bought in a long while. This featured a letter from Tom J about his *Castlevania Symphony Of The Night* horror story. However I wanted to address the balance with a positive tale.

Just over two years ago my gaming addiction was being restricted by my forthcoming wedding and all the associated costs. Taking a trip out to a local Sunday market (with the missus in waiting) I stumbled across a stall full of releases from the 32 and 16-bit generations. Amidst all the usual to be expected titles I picked up the *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* (limited edition) which was in mint condition. I couldn't recall having seen it before, and I did know a few *Castlevania* enthusiasts. Anyway, I held tightly onto the game for the next five minutes as the stall owner explained that it was about "zombies and such" and was "a good shooter." I nodded in approval, not wanting to ruin the chances of the sale. £7 was exchanged and the package was mine, in all its mint condition glory. However my elated spirits at pulling off such a great deal were immediately shot down by the future wife. How could I buy another game? And one that was a few years old? What a waste of money, etc. as we walked around the market and the car journey home.

Ten days later it sold on Ebay for £127 and I never saw a penny of it. So I have to say I'm more than looking forward to the Xbox Live Arcade version.

Cheers

Jason J

We love hearing about good luck stories, so well done Jason! Can you believe SCEA at one point refused to release the game because it was 2D, and only did so after Konami twisted their arm? Silly SCEA… also, since you're enjoying Issue 29, we hope you continue to buy the mag regularly.

UNTOUCHABLE TEMPLE

Don't get me wrong, I'm not the best videogame player ever. I've had my moments. I completed *Wardner* in the arcade without getting hit once and had a well deserved UK high score… Some of you retro-gamers might remember my high scores in C+VG, C+VG Complete Guide To Consoles, Club Nintendo and Nintendo Magazine System… I faked my *Power Strike* score on the Master System, that score is not possible, that's the only faked score though. Anyway my point is after reading about Tony Temple's record on *Missile Command* I put it on for a crack! What is he a robot? The guy should be a starfighter pilot or something! The man must have the reactions of Joe Shinobi! That score is mindblowing…

Paul Stokes (PJ)

Roger that Squadron Leader, we read you loud and clear. Sorry to hear about you faking your score, we're glad you got that off your chest. It's not good to keep things bottled up for years. As for Tony Temple, what can we say? Sometimes it clicks and you're in "the zone", man and machine integrated as one.

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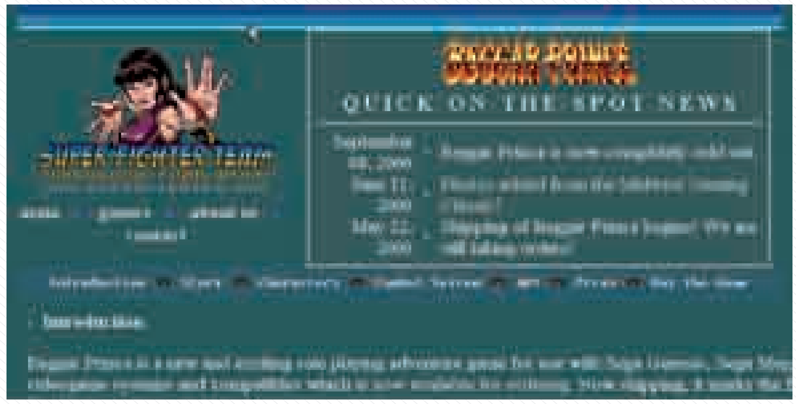
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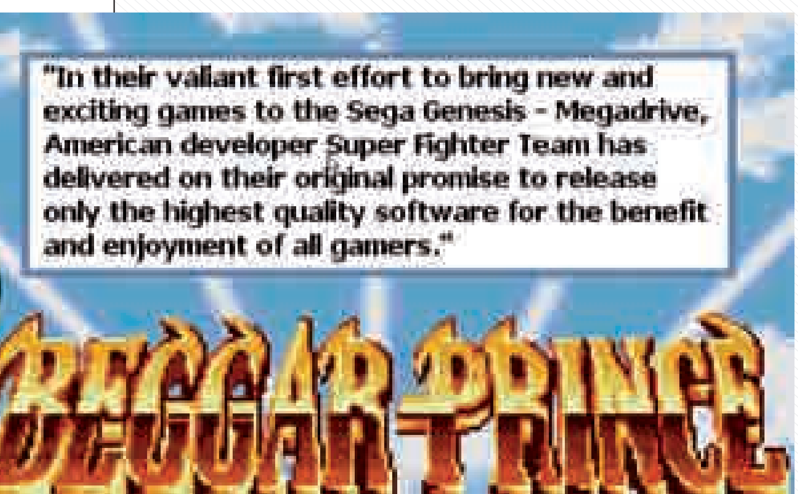
BEGGER PRINCE SELLS OUT, WHILE THE RETRO REMAKE ENTRIES ARE IN

SUPER FIGHTER TEAM'S FIRST MEGA DRIVE GAME SELLS OUT

IT BEGGARS BELIEF



» All good things sadly come to an end



» So many people can learn so much from this. Let's just hope they take time to listen

On 08 September Super Fighter Team made its last shipment of the *Beggar Prince*, marking the very sad end of an incredible home-brew journey.

Super Fighter Team was founded in 2004 and took its name from the team's first game. Super Fighter Team quickly became a showcase and demonstrated a huge talent for game making and design.

Buoyed by early success the developers moved on to *Beggar Prince*, a translation and enhanced version of an RPG that originally started life in Chinese before doing the rounds across the net's finest hacking sites.

Not content with creating just another download, Super Fighter Team evolved *Beggar Prince* into a full product, sitting on a 32 megabit cartridge; it included four save slots and came with a clam style plastic case and 27 page instruction booklet, transforming itself from a nice idea into the first commercial Genesis/Mega Drive release in eight years. Region free the game became a worldwide hit despite having a retail price of $40.

As *Beggar Prince* carried security measures to prevent current emulators from running a ROM version, it comes at no surprise, but remains disappointing, to see the game selling for far more than its initial value on auction sites.

After the short retail life of *Beggar Prince*, May '06 to September '06, it's unclear what the future holds for Super Fighter Team; it is well documented that it is just about broke, even with *Beggar Prince*. This may signal a return to the freeware that made it famous, or its portfolio could expand to other formats. Either way, Super Fighter Team has no intention of resting on its laurels just yet.



» Mmm, a shiny *Space Invaders* cabinet. Lovely

RETRO GAMING GETS THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE TOKYO GAME SHOW

DON'T LOOK BACK FOR RETRO, LOOK EAST

The Tokyo Game Show is nearly upon us, ready to show us all that is shiny, new and future in the world of videogames. With a Tagline of New Excitement, New Sensations and a New Generation, you'd be forgiven for wondering why the organisers seem to be looking at retro rock for inspiration and we could understand any confusion caused by reading this in Retro Gamer. The reason it warrants a passing mention is that the event will contain the biggest retro exhibition ever seen in Japan.

Sponsored by Nintendo, Sega, Sony and Microsoft, the exhibition will cover the history of videogame consoles in Japan. This is important because many publishers and developers are often accused of failing to recognise their heritage and history. The shift in mindset signals the beginning of the biggest commercial opportunity that Retro Gaming has seen; notice how Sega appear in the same sentence as the big three again, the company with an unrivalled back catalogue seems to be holding all the aces at the moment, with new technologies becoming as increasingly dependent on old games as they are on new. Expect some big announcements about games from yesteryear and their newfound availability over coming issues.

As if to illustrate the recent lack of care and attention towards retro games, a games store in Tokyo's Yurakucho district has a display of vintage arcade cabinets to celebrate Famitsu magazine's 20th birthday. Nothing strange in that you might think, hard to believe then, that the exhibition contains the last working original *Space Invader* cabinet in Japan. Such was the phenomenon that *Space Invader* created in Japan; the country that gave birth to videogame's first worldwide smash hit actually ran out of Yen to play it with. A lesson to us all there.

WILL MICROSOFT'S NEW STUDIO PACKAGE RE-IGNITE THE HOME-BREW SCENE?

CALLING ALL BEDROOM PROGRAMMERS

This month also sees the final Beta release of Microsoft's XNA Game Studio Express.

Now you may be wondering what the minions at Microsoft have to do with retro gaming, well it's simple, as yet nothing, but upon the final release of XNA Game Studio Express they will be providing the development tools for almost all retro remakes and finally we will get to see remakes of 32-bit games and beyond that out perform the originals.

Based around Microsoft XNA technology that was previewed some three years ago at E3, Game Studio Express is game creation software for dummies, based around the tools used for 360 developments and running in c++, anyone with a slight understanding of computers will be able to make games.

Loaded with 3D tricks and wizardry, Game Studio Express's main appeal to developers and programmers isn't the accessible nature of the software or the polished results, but the fact that it is free.

All the tools that support Game Studio Express are also free and the only outlay will be for a $99 per annum Creator Club Subscription purchased through Xbox Live, this will allow you to play games on your 360.

Games are developed in tandem for 360 and Windows, so as long as a game is developed on Game Studio Express it will run on both systems, the only difference being that the 360 will only support local networked multi-player, whereas the Windows version will provide all the online options required for online play.

While Darran's dream of a pseudo 3D *Strider* with a *Devil Crash* soundtrack moves ever closer, games developed on this freeware will not be allowed commercial releases. As such Retro Gamer expects to see the retro remake community flourish.



» Let's hope Microsoft's announcement leads to more ambitious remakes…

» Imagine what a remake of *Strider* might look like. Darran would wet his pants

WE TAKE A BRIEF LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S RETRO REMAKES ENTRIES

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

August 31 this year saw the closing date for entries into the now annual Retro Remake competition. Games that have done well in the past include such prestigious remakes as *Stop The Express*, *The Continuing Adventures Of Miner Willy*, *Legend Of The Shadow*, and *SWIV Decimation*. All the above games considerably improved on the originals and offered levels of gameplay and immersion not seen since the early nineties; this year's roster, however, is far superior and is a fitting tribute and epitaph to the recently departed Steve Phelps.

Head over to www.remakes.org/comp2006/screenshots.php?page=1 to try the entries for free. Please download responsibly though as the site has become oversubscribed of late due in no small part to the quality and diversity on offer this year.

One of the prerequisites for the competition was that the games should be remakes of 8-bit or 16-bit games only, and boy have they remade some classics. Looking at the roster of games is like viewing a best of videogames history – all classics in their own right there are a few obscure remakes in their too, just to mix it up. So if *Mario* or *Kirby*, *Star Wars* or *Dig Dug*, *Ghostbusters* or ahem, *Panther* have ever helped to shape your present demeanour you will be well catered for.

In the interest of fairness Retro Gamer has decided not to review any competition entries until the judges have made their final decision on the winners, so if you want to hear our views on *Zynaps* and *3D Snake* you're going to have to wait. In the meantime we will be covering some of the other Retro Remakes out there along with some of the more obscure harder to find gems that reside in Retro Gamer's lock up, alongside the Sacred Ark Of The Covenant no doubt.

Good luck to all those that have entered and thanks for making retro a reality.





» When we're not playing our original arcade cabinet, we've been addicted to this rather impressive remake

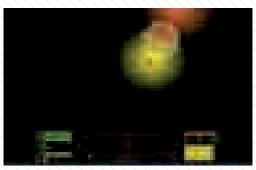
RETRO SCENE

Remake of the Mouth

OOLITE

FROM SPACESHIPS TO VAMPIRES

» A superb homage that's become a firm office favourite



» **FORMAT:** WINDOWS, MAC, LINUX
» **RELEASE DATE:** NOW
» **DEVELOPED BY:** AEGIDIAN
» **LINK:** HTTP://OOLITE.AEGIDIAN.ORG
» **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY

David Braben's classic *Elite* has finally received the remake it has so richly deserved. *Elite* has stirred a certain amount of lore down the years and as such few people have had the temerity to admit they missed it first time around, or even that they just didn't get it. Even Retro Gamer is divided with as many gamers here being new to the experience as there are *Elite* stalwarts bemoaning all versions other than BBC Model B's.

Languishing in hyperspace for so long with only a reputation for company and the knowledge that its home system has been destroyed by the relentless march of consoles, Aegidain has found and docked with Elite, brought it up to date with the technological advances of the last 20 years and renamed it *Oolite* before casting it back out to the stars.



» We've lost count of the hours that we wasted on the original Elite, and now we're doing it all over again

Gone are the wire frame graphics that outlined the craft and universe of the original, the craft are now steeped in polygons which fly from the deepest space toward horizons drenched in coloured hues from the local star. The white noise sound effects of the first now make way for some polished deep space sounds more akin to *Star Trek* than the BBC micro. Make no mistake though, *Oolite* loses none of the original's sense of vastness; a massive universe is yours for the exploring.

The journey to Elite status starts with the player taking control of a viper ship, setting you into the game as a harmless trader, you set about attaining wealth by buying and selling goods. Commodity prices change from one star system to another. There are numerous information screens that can be navigated informing



» The great thing about working on Retro Gamer is that you can spend all day playing old games and make out it's research

the player of a system's buying and selling prices. And it's during the transportation of goods that the game takes shape proper.

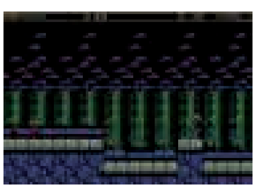
The player's route to each planet is populated by other star craft; pirates hunt you down for your cargo, harmless craft go about their own business but become fair game as you can steal their cargo, all the while the police fly around keeping an eye on things.

Every action affects the player's reputation and financial standing and so it goes on.

Make sure you check out the PDF with this game too – it really is a work of art.

RATING **96%**

CASTLEVANIA DRACULA'S SHADOW



» A fantastic NES game just got a little bit better

» **FORMAT:** FLASH
» **RELEASE DATE:** NOW
» **DEVELOPED BY:** MICHMEDE
» **LINK:** HTTP://COMPACTIONGAMES.ABOUT.COM/GI/DYNAMIC/OFFSITE.HTM?ZI=1/XJ&SDN=COMPACTIONGAMES&ZU=HTTP%3A%2F%2FWWW.CASTLEVANIA.NZONE.IT%2FDOWNLOAD.HTML
» **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY

SIMON SAYS, "SPIKE THE ONE WITH THE FANGS"

***Castlevania: Dracula's Shadow* is a remake of the NES classic *Simon's Quest* (*Castlevania 2*). Expanding on the source's quest you take on the role of Simon Belmont in his search for seven relics to restore his failing health, his prize for defeating Dracula in the first *Castlevania*.**

However, before the vampire hunter can truly heal from the curse of Dracula he must traverse forests, towns, castles, cathedrals and cemeteries, battling swathes of the undead.



» You can't hear it, but trust us, the soundtrack is superb

Dracula's Shadow uses the *Simon's Quest* original graphics set, however the programmers have refined them to the highest levels. Gone is the blocky aesthetic associated with the original game – now the sprites and backdrops ooze detail.

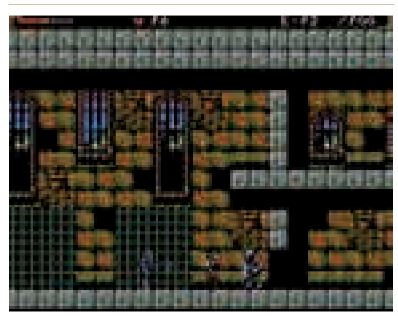
As always with *Castlevania* games, the score is amazing, rising and falling along with the action, and nodding towards important encounters as you approach.

Dripping in atmosphere the game takes on a foreboding that thickens as the narrative expands; this is after all a remake of the *Castlevania* game that first illustrated the futility of Simon's battle with the prince of darkness.

Hearts are the lifeblood of the game, collecting these not only restores health, but also allows you to buy equipment at the shops throughout the game. This equipment allows you to level up and is vital for completion of the adventure. Unlike other *Castlevania* titles there are no random drops from enemies and you are dependent on the traders scattered throughout the towns.

Dracula's Shadow's only weakness is that it compares unfavourably to other titles in the series because of its lack of boss encounters.

RATING **87%**



» The lack of boss encounters is this remake's only real weakness

HOME-BREW RATED

Home-Brew, love it or loathe it, you can't deny that it's becoming an important part of the retro scene. This month we look at two impressive remakes, *Oolite* and *Advanced Space Battle*

A FEW TOO MANY PESTS ON THE FARM

FARMER JACK IN HARVEST HAVOC

- » **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** CRONOSOFT
- » **PUBLISHER:** CRONOSOFT
- » **PRICE:** 1.99
- » **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY



» It looks great, it moves great, it plays horribly…

F*armer Jack* melds the winning formulas of *Mr Do!* and *Dig Dug*, distils it in the cattle shed with a shot of *Boulderdash*, bottles it up and ships it to the Spectrum. Akin to a West Country farmer's cider, the finished product overwhelms the flavour of its ingredients, leaving at best a very sour taste and at worst a headache.

Make no mistake, *Farmer Jack* is polished; when the screen is paused it resembles the very best that the Spectrum has to offer, the backdrops display an incredible use of the Spectrum colour palette, the sprites are well realised and flawlessly animated – even the sound effects are above average. All the more disappointing then that the flaws all lie within the game.

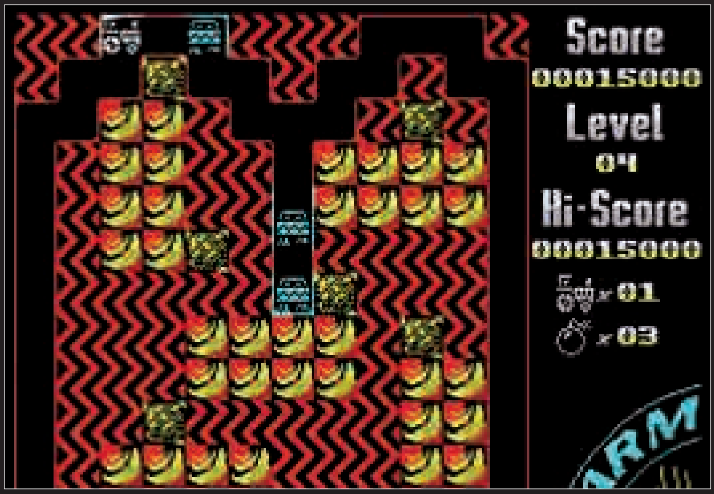
The player takes control of a tractor to harvest the crop in each game field, impeded along the way by an army of combine harvesters, which can be despatched either with a four way bomb or a carefully pushed hay bale.

For a game that requires precision movement to navigate mazes it is unforgivable that control of the tractor is so difficult, the turning arc is far too big and as such any accuracy in steering is near impossible. Ropey collision detection adds to the gloom and this too is exasperated by *Farmer Jack*'s biggest flaw. As more enemies appear on screen the game continually slows down; if the player despatches an enemy the game speeds up; as another enemy replaces the first game slows down again and so on. Many Spectrum games had similar speed issues, but few have left a game so frustratingly unplayable. Countless games are spoiled, as the player speeds past the part of the screen they were aiming for.

There is some enjoyment to be had however. There is a huge sense of reward when achieving a great score or clearing a level, possibly because of overcoming so many difficulties, by design or not. Still, it's best avoided.

RATING **39%**

» You would think that you could go straight to the bananas, you would be wrong





» Clearly defined visuals illustrate your weakness in battle perfectly

retro GAMER SIZZLER

A PLEASANT SURPRISE

ADVANCED SPACE BATTLE

- » **FORMAT:** C64
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **PROGRAMMED BY:** JAN BOTTCHER
- » **PUBLISHER:** PROTOVISION
- » **PRICE:** AROUND £13.99 INCLUDING VAT AND POSTAGE
- » **REVIEWED BY:** MIKE TOOLEY

After a lacklustre couple of months for commercial new releases, Retro Gamer may be forgiven for not having the high hopes for Protovison's *Advanced Space Battle*. After all, the game has been around as Public Domain for as long as the oldest Retro Gamer can remember.

It didn't take much playing for our doubts to be quelled, however, as Protovision has made a game that to date has few equals on the C64.

Advanced Space Battle plays out as the player brings galaxy-wide peace to an end. 36 civilisations inhabit 36 worlds and you have been nominated to rule them all; to rule though, you must first conquer.

Taking the form of a turn-based strategy, one to four players compete to dominate the galaxy through the conquest of surrounding planets by deploying fleets of space ships; these planets then act as bases and encourage deeper space conquest. Owning a planet however isn't the end. Planets are fair game for other players, and ownership can switch throughout the game. Fortunately *Advanced Space Battle* delivers resource management, which allows the player to build and develop for planet or ship defences and weaponry. Researching planets allows more and more options to be added to the player's inventory.

Graphically, *Advanced Space Battle* is a subtle blend of function and necessity. Dependant on the galaxy selected, the star field that provides the game's main backdrop and map can stretch to four screens. Scrolling is smooth and the sprites denoting each player's armada are clear. Remember the type of game this is – chess isn't all that to look at.

Special mention must go to *Advanced Space Battle*'s music. If Pink Floyd ever recorded an album using the Sid chip, it wouldn't be far from the meandering soundtrack that enlivens the galaxy here.

Completely menu driven, *Advanced Space Battle* teaches its peers a thing or two about direct control; a mouse and its left button are all the player needs to navigate the entire game.

Over a decade and a half since production stopped, Protovision has delivered the best reason yet to own a C64.

RATING **96%**



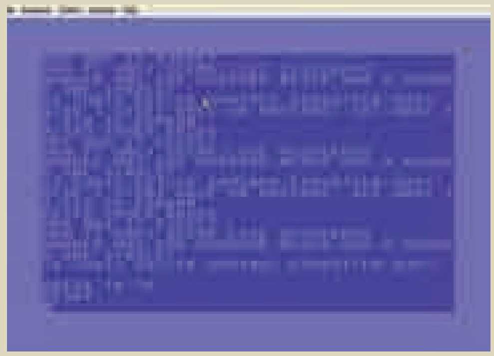
» Deep Jones will soon haunt your dreams – we assure you that he can beaten though…

EMULATE THIS

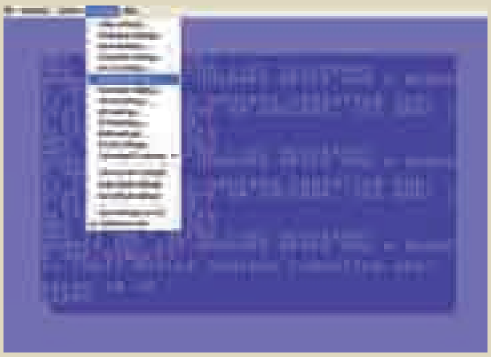
THERE ARE MANY FREE CBM 64 EMULATORS OUT THERE. FOR EASE OF USE AND COMPATIBILITY VICE TICKS MORE BOXES THAN MOST, WHILST RATHER HANDILY EMULATING ALL THE CBM 8 BIT FAMILY. VICE IS AVAILABLE FOR ALL MAJOR OPERATING SYSTEMS BUT WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT WINVICE FOR WINDOWS.



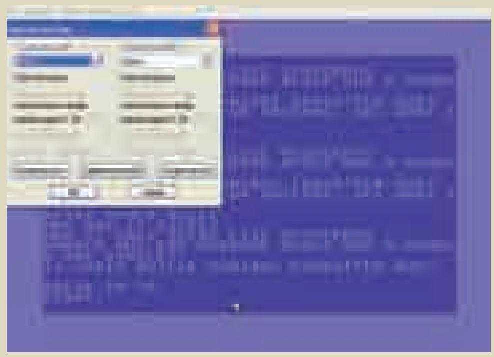
STEP ONE First off head off to www.viceteam.org and download the latest version of Winvice, currently 1.2. Save it to My Documents and then decide on a suitable name for a new file in which to extract the newly downloaded file. Close and reopen My Documents locate the new file and double click; once the file has opened there will be myriad Commodore icons each relating to a specific machine from Commodore's back catalogue.



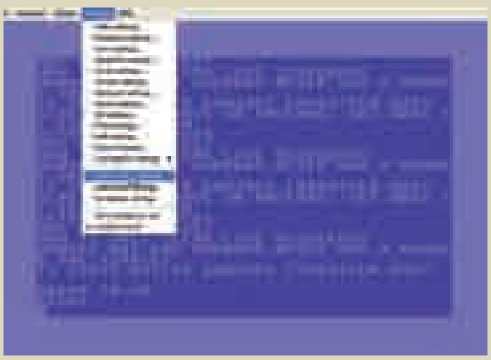
STEP 2 Double-click on the CBM 64 icon and the emulator starts. Before we go any further go to Settings then Keyboard and make sure that the third circle is checked (windows positional) – this indicates where the CBM key and Run Stop buttons are to be found, it maps the position on the PC keyboard to that of the Beige Beasts original dimension, so Caps Lock becomes Run Stop and CTRL become the commodore key (The CBM's mode setter).



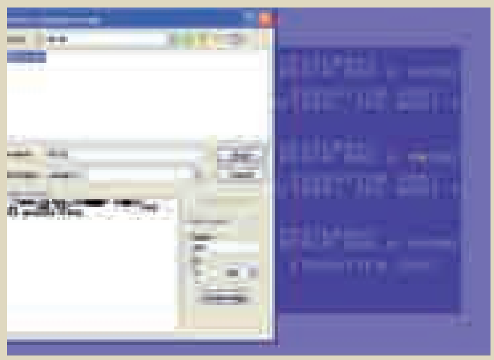
STEP 3 Head back into the Settings drop down menu and highlight Joystick Settings. This allows configuration of joypads and sticks; it's worth noting that the CBM 64 keyboard was terrible for games-playing and this has been emulated perfectly, so joysticks really are the option of choice. Make sure your controller is connected and highlight it from the drop down menu. Ignore the numeric option; configuring this to modern changes analog to digital making some games unplayable.



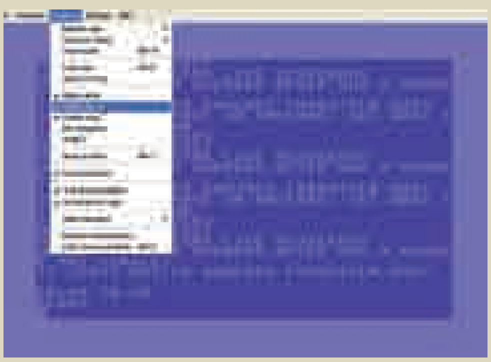
STEP 4 Still in the Settings/Joystick Settings menu there are two things left to do to configure the controller. The all buttons used as fire option is on as the CBM 64 only had one fire button on its controllers – the space bar doubled as the second button in most games (smart bombs, changing stance etc). Go to the no button auto fire disabled menu to map the smart option to the joypad if you would prefer.



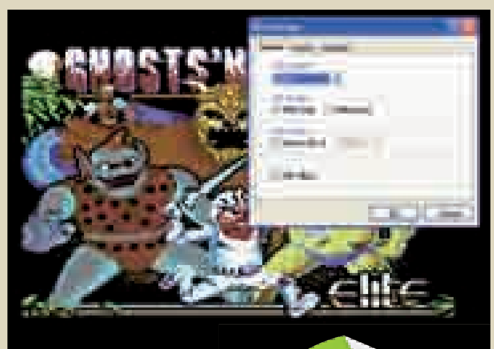
STEP 5 Ignore key mapping and the calibrate joystick options as both are surplus. Mirror these settings for both joystick ports as the default controller varied from game to game on the CBM64, then click Ok. Under the Settings menu click on Save Current Settings then exit the emulator. Create a new file in the folder where you have put the emulator for snapshots. Now reload the emulator and we can start on the good stuff.



STEP 6 Head to the File Menu and click on Auto Start disk/tape image. Winvice is temperamental with zipped files so ensure that any games that you want to play are unzipped. Browse through to your game folder to highlight the game you wish to play and double click – the game will load automatically. The game appears in windowed form; go to the options menu and check the double size option, which stretches the play area to almost full screen.



STEP 7 To take a snap shot at any time press Alt and S and to load snapshots Alt and I. Make sure that the snapshots are saved into the file we created in step 5 so that they are easily recovered. If you are having speed issues with any games, try reverting back to the windowed display mode by turning off the double size option in the option menu. If that fails move through the video options until the issue is resolved.



STEP 8 There are many configurations available for the legendary Sid Chip – the best way to ensure you get the most for your system is to load a game and then go to the Settings menu then Sid Settings – change the settings until you get the sound that you prefer. This will be different for every PC, but the game playing in the background will help you hear any adjustments. Kick back and enjoy Mr Hubbard's finest.

Note: If you're a Mac owner and fancy returning to the Commodore64 scene then worry not. Simply head on over to Richard Bannister's ever dependable site and download the excellent Frodo from http://www.bannister.org/software/frodo.htm it's a superb emulator and is able to play just about anything that you care to throw at it. It's also compatible with Richard's emulator enhancer

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



OCTOBER '06

POWER STONE COLLECTION

Released: 13 October

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Capcom continues to offer up the retro goodness, though this month its domination is not quite as strong as it has been. Fans of the Dreamcast games will be pleased to see that Capcom has added plenty of tweaks to its superb franchise and an early play confirms that it still has the magic that made the original games so much fun to play.



OCTOBER '06

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY

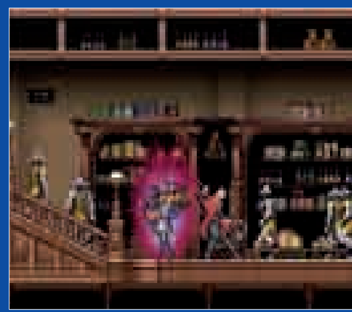
Released: 27 October

Publisher: SNK Playmore

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

The PSP is rapidly becoming the portable console of choice when it comes to playing retro games. SNK Playmore's excellent *Metal Slug* series is the latest franchise to get squeezed onto a UMD and an early playtest suggests it's going to be very good indeed. All six games will be included, with a variety of different options. Stay tuned, as this is going to be great.



OCTOBER '06

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

Released: 29 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

The next part of the *Castlevania* franchise introduces a very important slant to the gameplay – namely the ability to play co-op. With its brand new setting (WWII) and the ability to switch between the two main characters at will (or to explore the surroundings with a partner) this is already looking like a worthy follow-up to *Dawn Of Sorrow*. Don't let us down Konami.



NOVEMBER '06

CAPCOM CLASSICS RELOADED

Released: 10 November

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Capcom pushes ahead with its second PSP compilation (third if you count the US only *Capcom Puzzle World*) and like *Remix* it's looking mighty fine. Stalwart regulars such as *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Commando* and *Street Fighter II* will be sharing UMD space with more unusual titles such as the wonderful *Eco Fighters* and *The King Of Dragons*. We can't wait.



NOVEMBER '06

MEGA DRIVE COLLECTION

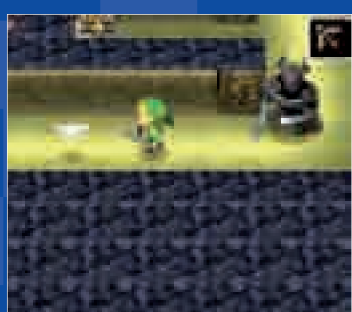
Date: 24 November

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, PS2

Well we've seen the final list of games and to be honest we're a teensy bit upset. While there are still some fantastic games available, including *Shinobi III*, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, *Phantasy Star IV* and *Ecco The Dolphin*, there are plenty of notable hits missing like *Revenge Of Shinobi*, *Castle Of Illusion* and the *Streets Of Rage* trilogy. The more cynical amongst you are probably waiting for the next compilation already…



NOVEMBER '06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: November

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Oh lordy, it's a *Zelda* game for the DS and it looks the business. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.



DECEMBER '06

SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS

Released: 01 December

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

If you're interested in *Card Fighters* check out the feature on page 38. As great as the Neo Geo version was, we're expecting the DS outing to be better – mainly due to the stylus implementation it will be using. It's unclear whether there will be two different versions, or if it will be a direct port of the original, but providing the play mechanics stay the same SNK Playmore can't possibly lose.



JANUARY '07

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL 2

Released: 19 January

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

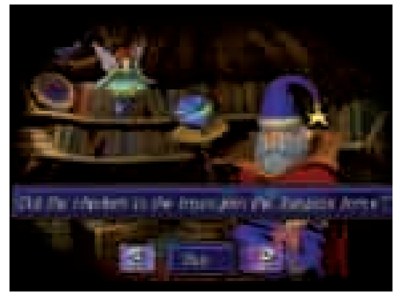
So then, Capcom's second PS2 and Xbox compilation contains all the games that featured on the first PSP compilation that hadn't been included on the first PS2 compilation, as well as all the games from the second PSP compilation that didn't appear on the first PS2 compilation. Confused? We are. All you have to do now is decide whether you want to play them at home or on the move.

EMULATION NATION





» Even Game Gear games have been translated, such as *Phantasy Star Adventure* (above left) and *Shining Force 3: Final Conflict* (right).



» The *Shining Force III* Premium Disk set a precedent, being the first Saturn title to have a successfully completed language patch available.

TRANSLATION 2: AN ASIAN ANIME ADVENTURE

We've been here. We've done this. But we're doing it again, because there's nothing quite like descending into the underground digital network of ROM-hackers and Asian-script dealers, as they sip ramen, smoke cigarettes, and revel within this fascinating super-geek binary vanguard.

"CONSIDERING ANTICIPATED GAMES LIKE MOTHER 3 ARE UNLIKELY TO BE LOCALISED, THE TRANSLATION COMMUNITY BECOMES AN ESSENTIAL PILLAR IN THE GAMING WORLD"

When Issue 25 hit the printers with the previous ROM Translation article, a fresh slew of information, news and developments became apparent. This follow-up article tries to cover what was missed, focusing on non-Japanese Asian games and also the strong connections between ROM hacking, the fan subs/dubs in anime, and the scanlations (photocopied translations) of manga.

This scene moves so quickly any article is only a snapshot; the "Community Graveyard" section on ROMhacking.net alone honours over 580 previously active individuals and groups, who are now retired, inactive, or simply untraceable. Seeking commentary on why the scene changes so rapidly I spoke with community leader Nightcrawler. His remarks are poignant, "A large part of the inactive group are 'retired' people so to speak. They left their mark in the community by contributing a translation patch, utility, document etc and have since left, moving on to other hobbies and things in life. For many people this hobby started in their teenage years, and they no longer have the time when they enter the real world after school. This community has been around for over a decade and it's not surprising that people have moved on. I wouldn't expect this to be a life long hobby for many people."

Clearly a movement forever in flux, they've still managed to complete over 300 translations covering systems from the Famicom to the Saturn and even PS2. Over the past decade that's on average nearly three translation patches every month. While this may be forbidden ground for the ethically minded (due to requiring ROM emulation), any reluctance should be forgotten when you consider the wealth of games available which would otherwise be unplayable in the original incarnation. Whether it's translations of Capcom's *Sweet Home* on the Famicom, the *Pinocchio*-styled simulator *Wonder Project J* on the Super Famicom, or simply English menus in games like *Tales Of Destiny 2* on the PS2, you will never come close to experiencing the full potential of videogames without indulging in such linguistically re-mastered works. When you consider highly anticipated games like *Mother 3* on GBA are unlikely to be localised, the translation community becomes an essential pillar in the gaming world.

Unwittingly it was Squaresoft that internationally gave people the impetus to flourish, and indeed birthed the scene we know today. By thinking gamers wouldn't notice the missing episodes of their popular *Final Fantasy* or *Secret Of Mana* series, they ignited the curiosity of computer literate teenagers who set about doing the job themselves (some were as young as 14 at the time). The great lengths these groups go to is astounding, often being better than the output of proper developers. They also occasionally improve the actual games. Veteran hacker Lin Xiaolang elaborated, "Regarding games that were hacked to better quality, *Bahamut Lagoon* (Dejap), *Der Langrisser* (a bunch of people), *Dai Kaijuu Monogatari* (myself) are all games to which were added variable-width dialogue fonts, variable-width 8x8 fonts (meaning no abbreviated item or character names), rearranged menus, and numerous hacks to optimise the game engine. Sometimes adding new features like gradient/translucent windows, etc. Those projects consumed at least 100Kb of pure



» Every SNES fan should set about emulating the translated *Wonder Project J*, it's tremendous fun and unlike anything else.

JOHN SZCZEPANIAK PREVIOUSLY EXAMINED JAPANESE ROM TRANSLATION IN ISSUE 25, BUT THERE'S SO MUCH WORTH COVERING HE AGAIN DELVES INTO THE UNDERGROUND HACKER SCENE TO BRING YOU THIS REPORT

BOTCHED DUBBING/ SUBTITLED MAGIC?

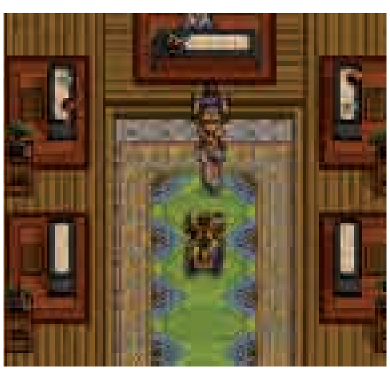


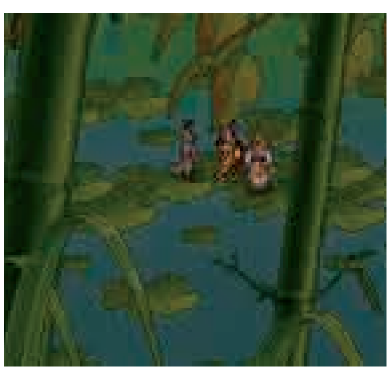
To sub, or dub? While this aspect of fan-translation is still in comparative infancy, with lengthy dialogue having only sprung up with the CD medium, there have already been attempts at dubbing in the infamous example of *Tales Of Phantasia* on SFC. It caused a great deal of debate on whether to dub, sub, or simply leave well alone. The general consensus was that while an interesting novelty the actual quality of the English voices (especially in the intro song) were poor. It remains to be seen however, just how the community will tackle more recent CD based games, such as *Policenauts*, which contain a tremendous amount of dialogue. Meanwhile, those creating a *Shining Force III* PC remake are trying to translate and record English dialogue for all of it. Check out the forum on www.shiningforcecentral.com to hear the audio auditions done so far, and check their current progress.

x816 assembly source code, while 100% of all text routines were completely rewritten. Of course you can't compare them directly to official efforts, [since those games were never officially translated]."

The translations themselves are also a delicate matter, much as they are in the anime/manga world. Hacker and translator Mr Ryusui describes the similarities. "Having respect for the target audience is the most important part of a great translation: it's a delicate balancing act between the audience and the source material. Change too little, and you have something resembling the English anime dubs of *Overman King Gainer* (great voice talent but painfully bad writing). Change too much, and you have a different story entirely. A lot of stuff in Japanese comes out corny, goofy or stilted in our language and culture. Take my game (*Sylvanian Families*). I changed a line where the main character is describing a loaf of bread, to a slightly out-of-character quip that "maybe I could take a bite while no one's looking?" Perhaps in Japan it'd be perfectly within bounds for a girl to start waxing poetic over how her bread turned out perfectly, but in English, the slightly more mischievous reaction better conveys [this]."

Despite the greater comparative difficulty, game translations are analogous to and have much crossover with the anime and manga communities. For some, such as Matt La France, interest in the one leads to motivation in the other. He explained why he translates games, "I'm a big anime fan, and while that doesn't earn me any points in a community plagued with requests for *DBZ* [patches], one of my biggest goals is to enrich peoples' experience of anime stories and characters, by translating games based on them. I run the 'PSX Anime List' website, detailing such things. Japanese cartoons are popular [in America] now, but even so, games based on anime aren't frequently localized and released here. It doesn't help that a lot of the games are of poor quality, (*Fullmetal Alchemist* by the almighty



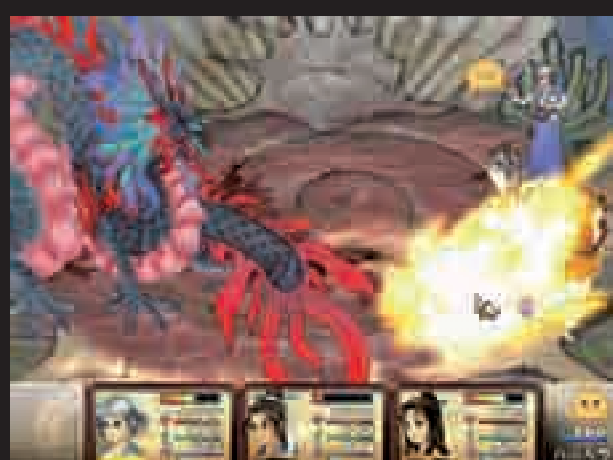


» They love RPGs in China. *Sword Of Xuan Yuan II: Dance Of Maple Leaves* for DOS, has similar mechanics to *Phantasy Star* games.

THE PLAYERS' REPUBLIC OF CHINA



There is a huge amount of excellent games developed only for China and Taiwan, which for various reasons are never officially released in other countries. So it falls to lone scribes such as Derrick Sobodash and Brandon Cobb to correct matters. We've already covered Cobb's *Beggar Prince* in-depth, but not so much Sobodash's *Heroine Anthem*. It has some of the most captivating 2D visuals and, despite being Chinese in origin, deals with Norse mythology and looks to be an incredible side-scrolling RPG with a unique battle system, once translated. The first Chinese RPG is believed to be *Xuan Yuan Sword,* developed by Taiwanese company Softstar Entertainment and released in 1990 for DOS computers. It's one of China's longest-running and most respected series, now totalling seven titles. The first game borrowed from Japan's school of RPG-thought, but the sequel began nurturing its own style which was influenced by indigenous culture. Pictured here is the side-story *Xuan Yuan Sword III: Scar Of Heaven* which utilised Asian calligraphy-art years before *Okami* was even envisioned. Softstar Entertainment's success with the *Xuan Yuan Sword* games served it well. It developed and in 1995 released the first game in a separate series, *Xian Jian Qi Xia Zhuan*, set in ancient China, featuring a kung-fu adventurer on a quest. This had five sequels and went on to become the bestselling and most famous of all Chinese RPGs. So popular it became the only Chinese RPG, apart from *Beggar Prince* recently, to be officially translated into another language for commercial sale – in 1999 it was translated and released in Japan on the Saturn, renamed *Senken Kikyouden*. The original was remade with updated visuals in 2001, and thankfully hobbyists have taken to translating it into English (http://paleng.blog.com/). The original name is difficult to interpret literally, but the group have settled on "*Chinese Paladin: The Legend Of Sword And Fairy.*" There's a legal demo available on their website.



EMULATION NATION

JOHN SZCZEPANIAK PREVIOUSLY EXAMINED JAPANESE ROM TRANSLATION IN ISSUE 25, BUT THERE'S SO MUCH WORTH COVERING HE AGAIN DELVES INTO THE UNDERGROUND HACKER SCENE TO BRING YOU THIS REPORT

"ESTABLISHED ANIME COMPANIES HAVE EVEN HIRED THOSE FROM THE VIDEOGAME FAN-TRANSLATION COMMUNITY, SUCH AS WHEN FUNIMATION WAS OFFERING CONTRACT WORK FOR TRANSLATING AND SUBTITLING"

TRICKY WORDS

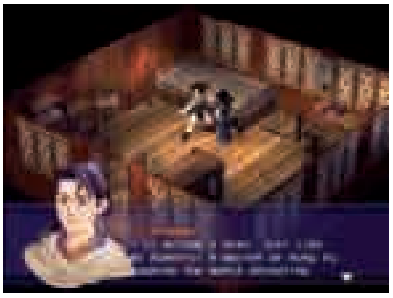
Treasure Of The Rudras (or *Rudra No Hihou* in Japanese) was one of the last SNES games by Squaresoft, released in 1996. It's an interesting title to examine, specifically regarding rom-hacking and fan-translation, because of its unique magic system. Instead of acquiring spells at intervals you have to create them out of words, or "mantras" as they're called. Basically you type out a word in the status screen, then use it during battle. If an enemy uses a powerful spell (word) you can copy it verbatim, or simply make up your own once you've understood the underlying "elements" structure of the system. With spells being meaningful words in Japanese, a fan-translation was difficult; it required not only text translation but also recoding everything. It was Gideon Zhi who hacked and reworked the entire magic system, before his team set about translating a previous French attempt into English.





» The *Love Hina* translation encouraged several community members to track down the anime source material used by the game.

Many thanks again to everyone in the ROMhacking.net community for answering questions, donating screens and aiding with research. Thanks also to Derrick Sobodash of Cinnamonpirate.com – be sure to pledge your support for his *Heroine Anthem* patch.



» The English translation of *The Legend of Sword* and *Fairy* looks promising. A nation of two billion people surely can't be wrong?

Square Enix was almost universally despised). I've worked on some non-anime games, but my primary interest has been the anime titles (*Slayers*, *Maison Ikkoku*, *Bubblegum Crash*, *Magic Knights Rayearth*, *3x3 Eyes*). I wish to better understand the games' content, since sometimes they really add something to the story universe they're based on." His site, psxanimelist.com, is a great resource for fans of anime PSOne titles.

La France raises a good point, since while publisher MVM released the *Yu Yu Hakusho* anime in the UK, no companies have risked releasing the corresponding games over the years. Thanks to 'Aeon Genesis Translation Projects' though, the SFC iterations should soon be available in English (http://agtp.romhack.net/). Other examples include *Tenchi Muyo!*, *Sailor Moon*, and countless attempts at translating the *DBZ* games. Sometimes fan translations of great games will encourage people to check out the source material they were based on, such as *Love Hina Advance* on GBA. This persuaded community members to acquire the original *Love Hina* manga which they'd been unaware of. Large and established anime localisation companies have even hired those from the videogame fan-translation community, such as a few months ago when FUNimation was offering contract work for translating and subtitling. This represents a significant cross-over between the three mediums, highlighting how a grass roots movement in one can lead to earning money and being recognised across the mediums. The head of FUNimation went on record stating that he respected the high-quality work done within the gaming community.

But work is not only done on such Japanese games. Slowly there is increasing interest in translating Korean and Chinese titles, to the point that localisation group Super Fighter Team has done it commercially. Its officially licensed game which Retro Gamer recently covered, *Beggar Prince*, is the first Western Mega Drive release in eight years. Of course going commercial has brought about many problems, including the wrath of the translation community who for the most part never sell their translations (though some do solicit donations). There are other exciting Chinese Mega Drive games, such as *Barver Battle Saga – The Space Fighter* which was translated into Russian (along with a Cyrillic font!) and renamed *Final Fantasy* (presumably for brand recognition), but few of these are currently being considered for translation. If *Beggar Prince* is a success though, the future should be interesting. Brandon Cobb of SFT said, "Very few people work with Chinese language games, and those are about the only ones I'm interested in seeing translated. We at Super Fighter Team would like nothing more than to jump into working on another game." There's an entire realm of Chinese RPGs out there (see boxout), and still so much left uncovered regarding the hacking of our favourite retro classics. Expect further reports in future issues, including coverage of entirely non-translation based hacking topics.



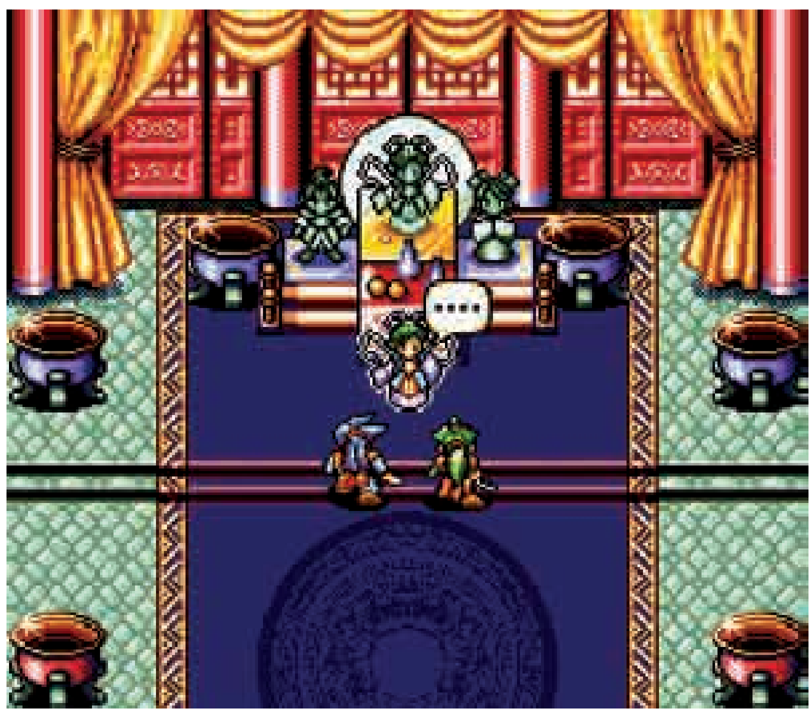
» There's been no mention of an English release for *Mother 3* on GBA. So in the ultimate example of middle-fingered defiance, fans are doing it themselves!



» This is what happens when professional companies translate text too literally.



» *Illusion City* for the MSX, a promising cyberpunk RPG set in post-apocalyptic Hong Kong.

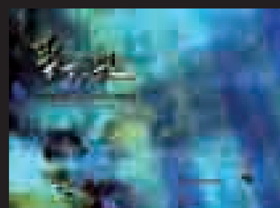


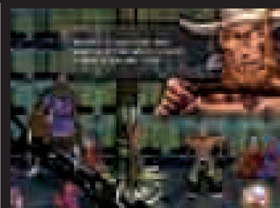
» Another awesome Chinese RPG on the MD, *Fengshen Yingjiechuan* (or *Heroic Legend Of Sealing Gods*). There's just too many!

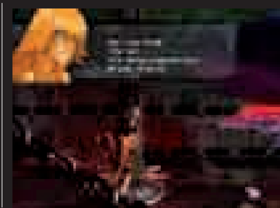
CINNAMON PIRATES IN BEIJING

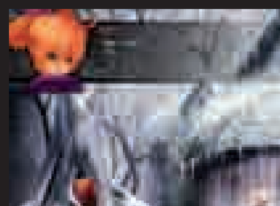
RETRO GAMER INTERVIEWS CHINESE-LANGUAGE PROFESSOR DERRICK SOBODASH, AKA MR D, AKA CINNAMON PIRATE, REGARDING A TURBULENT LIFE IN TRANSLATIONS PLUS BEGGAR PRINCE AND HEROINE ANTHEM.



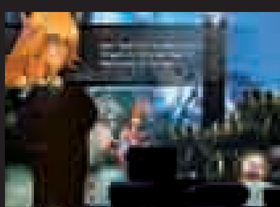


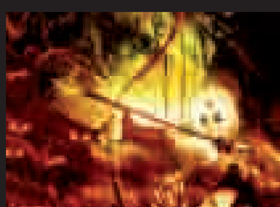


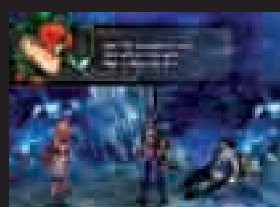












Retro Gamer) Tell us a little about yourself.

DS) I've been involved in fan translation since 1996, when I was part of RPGe. That was the last time I ever worked with a group, and the last time I ever released a work-in-progress patch. I want to move on when I finish *Der Langrisser* and *Heroine Anthem*. Next year I'll hit 25, and I will have been doing this for over 40 per cent of my life. Time to move on! My current project, libPirate (http://libpirate.cinnamonpirate.com/), is a programming library with all the code I've written for game translations. Consider it a useable farewell gift instead of the usual cryptic documents.

Retro Gamer) The community focuses on Japanese, but you've encouraged other translations?

DS) I've encouraged not only Korean and Chinese translations, but any language other than Japanese. The groups Lakuuna and Revolve started some Korean-language projects, but today they are "mostly dead." The obsession with Japan is the second most dangerous limiting factor for the scene. It cuts off thousands of games from becoming potential projects.

RG) Most people work on FC/SFC games. Your views?

DS) If obsession with Japanese games is the second most dangerous limiting factor, this is the first. FC and SFC only have so many games, and they're almost tapped out. I'm sure a few people will scream there are more great games left. These are the same people who would translate *Bazoo!* and *Traverse: Starlight & Prairie*. Unless the scene branches out onto more systems, you will see increasingly poor games translated. When the scene is putting out games only the [we-must-translate-everything] crowd cares about, that will be the end of things.

Retro Gamer) Tell us about *Heroine Anthem*.

DS) *Heroine Anthem* was started in 2003. At that time, I was playing a lot of Chinese RPGs. I had just finished *You Cheng Huan Jian Li*, a fairly fun one by Dynasty, also *Xian Jian Qi Xia Zhuan II*, sequel to the game I'm helping the L.S.F. English Project with (http://paleng.blog.com/). A Chinese guy on [my] forum suggested I try *Heroine Anthem*. It struck me as a good project because of its amazing graphics and music, and its incredibly non-Chinese setting. In other words: the perfect vehicle for exposing people to Chinese games. While people don't bat an eye to strange words and phrases like anime and kabuki, words like wuxia are labelled too strange for "the Western ear," and jingju gets mutilated into "Chinese Opera." I've reluctantly accepted that anything requiring cultural background to appreciate, people often ignore.

Retro Gamer) Retro Gamer has it on good authority that you were involved with *Beggar Prince* – is that right?

DS) I was hired by Super Fighter Team as the lead programmer for the *Beggar Prince* project. The reason the scene seems to be crying is because Death Adder sent a rather insulting message two years ago. As none of us forget anything or move on, the scene still cries whenever *Beggar Prince* is even mentioned. This was exacerbated by a rant posted by someone hacking it before Death Adder got the licence. The rant was picked up by Amitrius of FantasyAnime.com who reposted it. You know, because the Internet doesn't have enough drama. In the end, if someone wants to make money on a translation project and actually acquires the licence for it, more power to them. At least Death Adder never hid his commercial goals. I find soliciting donations far more devious.

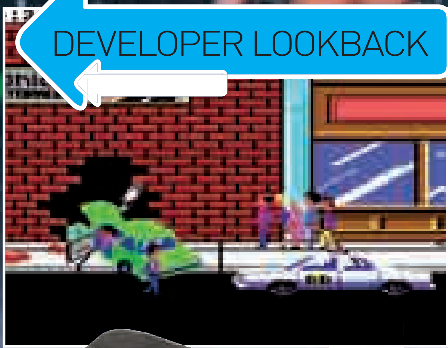
RG) Where do you see the future of fan translations?

DS) If things stay the same, I don't see anything bright. If you just stare at the moon, you'll miss all the stars. Japan is the motherland of videogames – but only when you disregard everything except console games. There is a lot of material out there in other languages; people on the Internet speak these languages. The solution should be the translation scene. Even if you stay within Japanese, there are hundreds of games on dozens of systems still ignored by hackers as the emulators for those systems lack a debugger as convenient as ZSNES's. This is a way for the scene to branch out and reach more people. If new ideas and new members stop entering a scene, it's dead.

SIERRA ONLINE

Leisure Suit Larry, King's Quest, Police Quest – just a few of the many great franchises created by Sierra Online. Al Lowe and several other key developers reveal what working for Sierra Online was really like

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK





RETROINSPECTION...

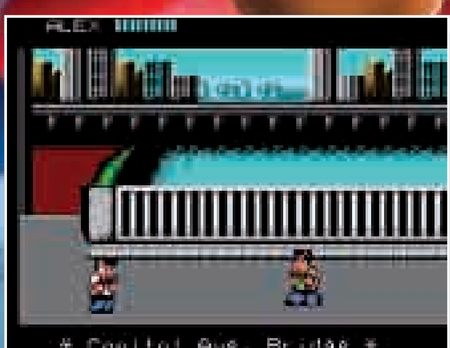
With Nintendo's next generation console waiting in the wings there's never been a better time to look back at its 64-bit masterpiece

THE MAKING OF... WIZBALL

RIGHTLY HAILED AS ONE OF THE GREATEST COMMODORE 64 GAMES EVER MADE, JON HARE EXPLAINS HOW HIS MASTERPIECE BROUGHT A BIT OF COLOUR TO GAMERS EVERYWHERE

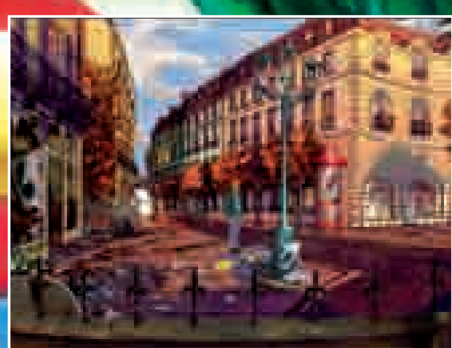
WHY YOU MUST PLAY...

Coming across as a tonge-in-cheek brawler inspired by films like *The Warriors*, the English version of *River City Ransom*, released in 1990, was severely underated. You must play it!



THE MAKING OF...

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BLOODY WOLF

You and your equally crazy buddy have just killed a million grunts, ridden exploding motorbikes, and re-enacted the best scenes from various action flicks – all to rescue the president. No surprise there then!



SCREEN 1

At last, the final boss! Not content with the standard practice of a machine gun to the face, in an act of supreme machismo our hero resorts to using just a knife. Because if you're not able to kill a deranged-and-armed-to-the-teats general with just a knife, then you're not a real man.



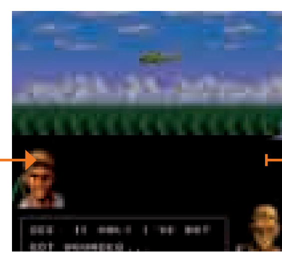
SCREEN 2

The mission isn't over, you now need to escort Mr Prez to the rescue chopper. For the love of God, run faster you idiot! They're shooting at us! In videogames, American presidents are inept fools unable to fight their way out of a wet paper bag. A bit like real life then.



SCREEN 3

You certainly took your sweet time to arrive – damn right I'm rushing into that chopper! It may be cramped, worryingly full of bullet holes, and smell of sweat, but the sight of it signifies freedom, safety, and an inevitable visit to the army hospital, replete with busty nurses.



SCREEN 4

Safely away from danger and flying above a beautiful forest (not to mention getting ever closer to that military hospital), our two heroes (the only people crazy enough to accept this mission) engage in some banter which makes absolutely no sense. Next stop, the military commander!



SCREEN 5

Like, totally knarly, man. Far out! Don't you just love it when they promote Engrish-speaking surfer-dudes to the rank of general? No wonder the president keeps getting kidnapped, if people like this are in charge of security! Still, at least the bumbling fool is safe. Time for a pint.